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# CREATIVE POETRY

A STUDY OF  
ITS ORGANIC  
PRINCIPLES

*By*

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*To*  
*My Predecessors*  
*ALL*  
*In Both Europe and America*  
*Whose Researches in Poetic Technique*  
*Have Made This Volume*  
*POSSIBLE*





## PREFACE



HIS volume is made possible by the copious and painstaking industry of hundreds of investigators and scholars who have preceded me. It could come into being only because of both the theoretical and the purely experimental work in laboratories by scores of men whose scientific investigations have brought to light various facts concerning English poetry, many of which are now reliable landmarks. Much that they have done has become common knowledge among all serious students of so elusive a subject as creative poetry. To avow a general acknowledgment of obligation and gratitude to all these is a pleasant duty.

It will be detected readily that this treatise is not a history of the materials of poetry, not a dissertation on the history and theory of poetic technique, not a manual of the conventional and familiar mechanics of verse. It is, however, a study of poetry from the standpoint of (1) the psychological nature of the poetic mind, viewed in the light of the most recent laboratory experiment, and (2) the physical make-up of the English language. This volume has been written in the conviction that, given the psychological nature of the creative mind and given the linguistic nature of a particular language, in this study the English language, a rather definite poetic product and poetic form will result. In my statements of precepts I have not wished to be dogmatic. I have not desired even to postulate any theory of

poetry. I have tried to let the facts speak for themselves. Accordingly, in my conclusions, where I have been obliged to differ from many scholars who have preceded me, it has been not unpleasant to part company with them.

Above all, I am quite unable to share Professor George Saintsbury's well-known invitation and admonition to his readers, that "we are affectionately bidden to unlearn the impressions of our ignorance." Not yet have we arrived at the time when the final word on creative poetry has been written. While I cannot assert, with him, that I have read pretty much all the poetry in England since the Conquest, I can say, with many others, that I have read a good deal of it, much of which must be identical with that which he has perused. Yet I have not been able to concur in the theories of English poetic technique so admirably advocated by Professor Saintsbury and his ardent followers. Creative poetic utterance is far too human and far too organic a product to be reduced to any mechanical strait-jacket of poetic meter and poetic form. In no instance has our English poetic technique been borrowed largely from the French and from the classics. Laboratory experiments by Professor E. W. Scripture—his *Grundzüge der Englischen Verswissenschaft* has just appeared, too late to be quoted in the text of this volume, though footnote citations from it have been made—show definitely that poetry is fluid and hence not naturally reducible to any exacting rule. His volume contradicts in almost every detail the usual teaching of English metrics.

Concrete experiments in our laboratories, in both Europe and America, are making more and more untenable many views as to English poetic technique about which we have been so very positive. We are impelled to infer that perhaps the real study of creative English poetic technique is still

in its infancy. From those who are so zestfully engaged in experimental work in phonetic, physical, and psychological laboratories, we have much to look forward to. Perhaps even our standard treatise on so important a subject as English meter is yet to be written.

What the organic principles of creative English poetry are, this volume aims to set forth. I have studiously tried to be constructive and not merely over-technical and hyper-critical. Especially have I written in terms of my feelings about the study of creative poetry: *The letter of the law killeth, but the spirit thereof giveth life.*

It is more than a pleasure to acknowledge the kindly interest and assistance from many scholars, in both Europe and America, during the preparation of this volume. To the several authors and publishers who have graciously permitted my quoting short poems or excerpts from long ones, I am peculiarly indebted, particularly to the publishers of scholarly material which I have been permitted to cite: The Macmillan Company for material from Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, Louise Pound's *Poetic Origins and the Ballad*, Saintsbury's *History of English Prosody*, Courthope's *History of English Poetry*, and Lewis Browne's *That Man Heine*; Longmans, Green and Company for material from Baldwin's *English Medieval Literature* and Carr's *Psychology, A Study in Mental Activity*; Oxford University Press for material from Lamborn's *The Rudiments of Criticism*; G. P. Putnam's Sons for material from Fairchild's *The Making of Poetry*; Houghton Mifflin Company for material from Puffer's *The Psychology of Beauty* and Lowes's *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*; Henry Holt and Company for material from Woodworth's *Psychology, A Study of Mental Life*, Angell's *Psychology*, Gordon's *Aesthetic*, and Spingarn's

*Creative Criticism*, which Professor Spingarn himself has given permission to quote; Charles Scribner's Sons for material from Lombroso's *The Man of Genius* and McDougall's *Outline of Psychology*; Ginn and Company for material from Cook's editions of Horace's *Art of Poetry* and Leigh Hunt's *What Is Poetry?*; E. P. Dutton and Company for material from Ernest Rhys's *Lyric Poetry*; Doubleday Page and Company for material from Smith's *What Can Literature Do for Me?*; Harcourt Brace and Company for poems from Mr. Louis Untermeyer's *Challenge*; *The American Journal of Psychology* for various quoted passages; the Yale Psychological Laboratories, for permission to quote material from Wallin's *Researches in the Rhythm of Speech*; the *Psychological Review* Company for material from Dewey's *Theory of Emotion*; the Carnegie Institution of Washington for material from Professor Scripture's *Experimental Phonetics*; Carleton Brown and the *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* for materials too numerous to list; Columbia University Press for material from Jacob's *The Foundation and Nature of Verse*, which Dr. Jacob also consents that I quote.

And, finally, there are two obligations which one cannot express to the full: one is to the staff of the Stanford University Press who have striven zestfully to reduce errors in this volume to a minimum; the other is to Dr. George Thomas, president of the University of Utah, who has provided financial assistance for my research, without which this volume could not well have come into being.

B. ROLAND LEWIS

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH  
June 1, 1931



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CREATIVE  
POETRY





theories. Others, like Schiller and Spencer, who developed the idea, hold that it is the outgrowth of the *play impulse*.<sup>21</sup> Spencer holds that play is the result of superfluous energy, accumulated in periods of inactivity; and, combining this idea with the imitation idea, he suggests that the instinct for imitation prompts the expenditure of this energy in the form of mimic chasing, fighting, and killing. The joy of this leads to the dance, a rude form of drama, and to the beginnings of the pictorial and graphic arts. Professor Baldwin Brown<sup>22</sup> asserts that, under the guise of rhythm, measure, and proportion, the art impulse is the result of an instinct for order. Utilizing Spencer's play-impulse theory, Professor Brown holds that "two elements must combine for the production of even the simplest form of art. There must exist a certain raw material in the form of a movement, an act, a process, which may be the mere instinctive throwing-off of superfluous nervous energy or may possess more or less pronounced emotional or intellectual character; and this material must be disciplined into a certain distinctness of form by the principle of 'order' till it becomes a rational product."<sup>23</sup> The theory that art is the result of the instinct for festal or ceremonial celebration<sup>24</sup> is but secondary rather than primary, since the *festal* occasion serves only as a channel for the overflow of the *impulses* enumerated above. Other writers hold that the art instinct is the outgrowth of animal *instinct to attract others*. Darwin in his *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man* used this idea to explain color and adornment in animals and man. This theory has been used effr

<sup>21</sup> See Spencer's *Psychology*; see also Grant Allen's *Psychology of Aesthetics*.

<sup>22</sup> *The Fine Arts*, pages 10-19.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, page 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, page 25.

tively and has been given wide application.<sup>25</sup> And still others indicate that creative art is the result of an *instinctive attempt to repel or terrify*—just the opposite of Darwin's idea. De Greef,<sup>26</sup> adopting Spencer's superfluous energy theory, says that such energy finds expression in two forms: (a) in the decorations with which primitive warriors adorn their persons to render them more terrible and more formidable, and (b) in the pleasing embellishment of arms, clothing, and utensils. Sully<sup>27</sup> supports this theory. On the other hand, Bosanquet<sup>28</sup> supports the idea that the creative art impulse is the outgrowth of the *instinct to self-expression*. This theory is combined, by still other students<sup>29</sup> of the subject, with the idea that art is the outgrowth of the *impulse to communicate*. And finally there are the theories of Hirn and Professor Giddings,<sup>30</sup> Hirn holding that "The art impulse is a *desire for objectification of emotion*," while Giddings expresses it that art is the outgrowth of our *instinctive desire to obtain an image of the intangible or spiritual part of man*.

Excellent and interesting as these several theories are, they do not render much aid in understanding the creative impulse as operative in poetry. It may not be wholly amiss if we attempt to arrive at a more rational and perhaps a more

<sup>25</sup> G. Semper's *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten*, 2 volumes, H. R. Marshall's *Pain, Pleasure, and Aesthetics*.

<sup>26</sup> *Introduction à la sociologie*, II, 148-188.

<sup>27</sup> *Mind*, N.S., II, 404.

<sup>28</sup> *History of Aesthetics*, chapter i; an article by the same author, in *id.*, N.S., III, 153.

<sup>29</sup> Prescott's *The Poetic Mind* is a veritable storehouse of pro and con on the subject.

<sup>30</sup> Hirn's *The Origin of Art*, page 11, and Giddings' *Principles of Psychology*, pages 247 ff.

simplified conception of the poetic mind. Fortunately, recent modern psychology comes somewhat to our aid in the matter: while there is yet much to explain and clarify, still we can suggest some things that may provide for us a more rational conception of the poetic mind than is implied in poetic madness and divine inspiration.

At the outset may we not suggest that the creative impulse is wholly human and biological, and not superhuman. It is distinctively the result of the organic functioning of the human organism. A human being, our psychologists tell us, is essentially a biological organism; that is, like the more simplified one-celled amoeba, it is, by instinctive reaction to the various aspects of its physical environment, capable of sustaining its own life and of reproducing its own kind by appropriating to itself materials from that physical environment. Through this process of organic reaction to stimuli, it consumes food and eliminates its waste material; it adjusts itself to conditions of pain and pleasure of various manifestations; it escapes, if possible, from those factors which would destroy it, and seeks out those which are conducive to its existence and its propagation. The living conduct, then, of the human organism is instinctively that of motor expression to every incoming sensory impression; that is, for every sensory impression coming into the neural centers there is a corresponding and complemental expression in terms of outward muscular action or objective conduct. In the neural centers, there is always a process of instinctive adjustment toward stable equilibrium. In a word, this adaptive activity in the nerve centers is "a response on the part of an organism in reference to its physical or social environment of such character as to satisfy its motivating condition."<sup>31</sup> The

<sup>31</sup> Carr's *Psychology, A Study of Mental Activity*, page 1.

"adaptive activities of an organism directly involve such structures as (1) the sense organs, (2) the nervous system, and (3) the muscles. The intelligent possibilities of these organisms are limited by their (1) sensory, (2) neural, and (3) motor equipment."<sup>32</sup> Such adaptive activities of the human organism, consequently must include all human activities and all human products. The creative poet's mind, and poetry itself are not to be omitted from the inclusion.

No psychologists tell us that the moment, in our neural adaptive activity, we are unable to consummate our outgoing motor expression—the organic reasons, though speculatively interesting, for our not being able to do so cannot be our concern here<sup>33</sup>—the moment we cannot express ourselves to the full, we are instinctively conscious of it and we experience what we know as emotion.<sup>34</sup> Within limits it may even be said that the greater our inability to express ourselves to the full, the higher the degree of emotion. "Watson has found

<sup>32</sup> Carr's *Psychology, A Study of Mental Activity*, page 16.

<sup>33</sup> See Wundt's *Untersuchungen zur Psychologie und Aesthetik des Rhythms* and his *Physiologische Psychologie*.

<sup>34</sup> For further discussion of emotion, see Dewey's "The Theory of Emotions," *Psychological Review* I, 552-570, and II, 13-32, and his *Psychology*, chapter xix, McDougall's *Social Psychology*, and his *Outline of Psychology*, chapters ii-xii; Carr's *Psychology, A Study of Mental Activity*, chapters ii, iii, iv, xii; Angell's *Psychology*, chapter xviii; Drever's *Instinct in Man*, Allport's *Social Psychology*, and his "A Physiological-Genetic Theory of Feeling and Emotion," *Psychological Review*, XXIX, 132-139, Ribot's *The Psychology of Emotion*, and Woodworth's *Psychology, A Study of Mental Life*.

For the James-Lange theory of emotion, anticipated in Hegel's *Philosophie des Geistes*, Section 401, see James's *Psychology*, Vol. II, chapters iv-xxv; Sully's *Outlines of Psychology*, chapters xi, xii; Titchener's *Outline of Psychology*, chapter ix; Wundt's *Physiologische Psychologie*, pter iii; and the references above, especially Dewey and Angell. See also Darwin's *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals*.

that anger can be provoked in a babe by holding its arms and legs when it is disposed to move them, and by holding the nostrils and thus interfering with its breathing activities."<sup>85</sup> Dewey has told us how angry he got when in a boyhood fight his opponent got him down, sat on him, and held him there practically impotent. "Everyone," he continues, "knows how the smart and burn of the feeling of injustice *increases* with the feeling of impotency; it is, for example, when strikes are beginning to fail that violence from anger or revenge, as distinct from sheer criminality, sets in."<sup>86</sup> McDougall, commenting on this theory of the nature of emotion as considered by Dr. James Drever in his *Instincts in Man*, says: "It asserts that emotions are experienced only when our natural tendencies to action are obstructed or in some way suspended." I have recognized this is true of angry emotions; that each obstruction is the specific condition of excitement of the combative instinct; and that the impulse of this instinct serves to re-enforce all other impulses when they are obstructed."<sup>87</sup> "It follows from this," says Dewey, "that all emotion, or excitation, includes inhibition. This is not absolute inhibition: it is not suppression or displacement. It is incidental to co-ordination [in the nerve centers]. The two factors of co-ordination, the 'exciting stimulus' and the 'excited response,' have to be adjusted, and the period of adjustment required to effect the co-ordination, makes the inhibition."<sup>88</sup> Emotion, as understood by our best modern psychologists, is thus a condition or status quo of the nerve

<sup>85</sup> Cited by Carr in his *Psychology, A Study of Mental Act* page 1.

<sup>86</sup> "The Theory of Emotion," *Psychological Review*, II, 2

<sup>87</sup> *Outline of Psychology*, page 320.

<sup>88</sup> "The Theory of Emotion," *Psychological Review*, II



centers resulting from conflicting organic impulses or from interrupted or impeded organic activity in the nerve centers.

"If in every activity we were perfectly successful, we should lead a life of pure habit, untroubled by problems, or by the need of learning or devising new reactions. Everything would be as easy as breathing and as unconscious. Only when we are checked in our activities and hindered from our objects do we begin thinking or feeling very much about them. Let us look at the case of fighting activity. Suppose one boy strikes another and the other promptly and thoroughly knocks him down. The victor would not normally feel anger; for he has followed a purely instinctive prompting to its natural end, and this without any interruption. If, on the contrary, his pugnacious instinct had been checked, whether by his sense of decorum or by the size of his assailant, the youth would have experienced the emotion of anger. The force which would normally go out in action would, in the latter case, be caged up in himself, and so create a disturbance. As another illustration, take the case when we are waiting to speak to some busy person. We have a question to ask or news to tell; our impulse has brought us to the place, and nothing remains but to speak. Minute after minute goes by. We have nothing to do, hence no outlet for our impulse, and the result is impatience and irritability, and finally, perhaps a very rage of exasperation. Here, then, is an emotion generated merely by suspense. But the suspense involves more than the one impulse to speak to this person; for during the period of waiting we are cut off from other activities which would have filled that time. Our exasperation, therefore, represents a conflict of impulses. The energy which ordinarily be discharged in definite activity now oozing out all over, and there consists the

irritability and the emotion. In fear, for another example, it is the checking of our first impulse to flight which gives the real sense of terror. In dreams we are not frightened by the pursuing of goblins and witches so long as we can run or fly merrily away, but when something drags us back, or a dreadful languor pulls us down, then we get the full experience of fear. The moment of impotence is the moment of poignant emotion."<sup>39</sup>

Thus it is that the period of maximum emotional condition corresponds to the period of highest lack of co-ordination and that the emotion ceases to exist the moment there is full co-ordination or stable equilibrium in the nerve centers. "But in any case," comments Angell, "the emotion evaporates when mutual antagonism and inhibition of impulses cease, and not till then."<sup>40</sup> "The inhibition once worked out," holds Dewey, "whether by displacement of one or by reconstruction of both contending forces, the effect dies out. . . . If these two co-ordinate without friction or if one immediately displaces the other, there is no emotional seizure."<sup>41</sup> "Thus an emotion," asserts Carr, "may well be called an organic commotion. In support of this conception, we may call attention to the well-known fact that the emotions tend to disappear with action. Our anger soon cools or wanes when we begin to fight, and terror no longer holds us in its grip when we indulge in strenuous flight. . . . Evidently the disappearance of the emotion with overt action is due to a change in the character of the organic reaction. Given an adequate motor outlet, these organic activities gradually become

<sup>39</sup> Gordon's *Aesthetics*, page 39.

<sup>40</sup> *Psychology*, page 378.

<sup>41</sup> "The Theory of Emotion," *Psychological Review*, II, 26, 27.

adapted to the exigencies of the act, and hence they lose their initial tumultuous and impulsive character and the experience is no longer labeled an emotion."<sup>42</sup> Obviously, too, emotion is an experience common to every human being—whether poet or not—varying only, perhaps, in duration and in degree of intensity.

In the instance of the creative poet's mind, the emotion resulting from his inability to express himself to the full not infrequently becomes so tense—the poet is always essentially emotional—that he may actually achieve the point where he loses his sense of personality. This is the heightened emotional condition that our best aestheticians call the exalting aesthetic mood. This is what is conventionally and traditionally known as "fine frenzy," "ecstasy," "the perfect moment of existence." It is precisely this degree of intensity of heightened and sustained emotion that, our psychologists would have us understand, differentiates the creative mind from the ordinary mind. And yet, most of us, again and again, in moments of appreciation or attempts at expression, have had this identical experience. Such a condition of mind is not dementia, not a case for immediate pathological treatment: it is only a case of normal abnormality. "The loss of personality! In that dreaded thought there lies, to most of us, all the sting of death and the victory of the grave. It seems, with such a fate in store, that immortality were futile, and life itself a mockery. Yet the idea, when dwelt upon, assumes an aspect of strange familiarity; it is our old friend, after all. Can we deny that all our sweetest hours are those of self-forgetfulness? The language of emotion, religious, aesthetic, intellectually creative, testifies clearly to the fading

<sup>42</sup> Carr, *Psychology, A Study of Mental Activity*, page 282.

of the consciousness of self as feeling nears the white heat. Not only in the speechless, stark immobility of the pathological 'case' but in all stages of religious ecstasy, aesthetic pleasure, and creative inspiration, is to be traced what we know as the loss of the feeling of self. Bernard of Clairvaux dwells on 'the ecstasy of deification in which the individual disappears in the eternal essence as the drop of water in a cask of wine.' Says Meister Eckhart, 'Thou shalt sink away from thy self-hood, thou shalt flow into His self-possession, the very thought of Thine shall melt into His Mine'; and St. Teresa, 'The soul, in thus searching for its God, feels with a very lively and very sweet pleasure that it is fainting almost quite away.'"<sup>43</sup> It is thus that the poet in his organic emotional experiences is both normal and also, to a degree, abnormal. Organically, however, the creative mind, though highly sensitive and highly emotional, runs true to form.

Thus it is that for the creative poet there is perhaps no poetry in the direct and free indulgence or expression of his sensory impressions. Both psychologists and poets confirm this idea. "It is only when this indulgence or expression is impeded that poetry arises."<sup>44</sup> "All invention presupposes a want, a craving, a tendency, an unsatisfied impulse."<sup>45</sup> . . . . "The desires are the fundamental motives, standing at the beginning of the poetic processes. These, when impeded, arouse emotions which are the 'ferment without which no creation is possible'—the passion which poetry always implies. . . . Poetry is always written in a mood of dissatisfaction."

<sup>43</sup> Puffer's *The Psychology of Beauty*, page 60. See also *ibid.*, pages 69-71, for illustrations of experiences in which there was a loss of personality. This entire chapter (iii) is an excellent study.

<sup>44</sup> Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, page 24.

<sup>45</sup> Ribot's *The Creative Imagination*, page 32.

tion,"<sup>46</sup> this sense of one's inability to express one's self to the full, this sense of one's being hindered in his instinctive tendency to utter all that he would utter. The greatest burden in the world is the burden of the incommunicable. "It is no mere appreciation of beauty before us, but a wild effort to reach the beauty above. It is the desire of the moth for the star," said Poe,<sup>47</sup> "a petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp now, wholly, here on earth, at once and forever, those divine rapturous joys of which we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses." It is as if one could not

Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak,  
Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break.

The poets, said Shelley, "learn in suffering what they teach in song."

Wordsworth, too, knew the creative mood—

To me the meanest flower that blows  
Gives rise to thoughts that lie too deep for tears.

There is excellent psychology for the idea that a tone of sadness accompanies genuine creative activity of every kind, Though the spirit is strong, the flesh is weak; try as he will, the poet cannot express himself to the full.

It is because the creative mind feels so keenly "the sad incompetence of human speech" that not infrequently the "thwarted poet becomes gloomy and morbid" for the nonce. Tennyson tells us his frame of mind when the expression of his feelings at the death of Arthur Hallam (*In Memoriam*, liv) was impeded:

<sup>46</sup> Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, pages 32, 128, 278.

<sup>47</sup> *The Poetic Principle*.

So runs my dream; but what am I?  
An infant crying in the night;  
An infant crying for the light;  
And with no language but a cry.

And Browning, too, has Andrea Del Sarto—quite sure of his own skill as a painter, of course—say,

I do what many dream of all their lives,  
—Dream? Strive to do, and agonize to do,  
And fail in doing.

“J.S. is perfectly right in regard to the ‘slipshod Endymion.’ That it is so is no fault of mine. No! though it may sound a little paradoxical, it is as good as I had power to make it by myself,” wrote Keats after an unfavorable review of his *Endymion*. And Elizabeth Barrett Browning held that her very “flesh would perish,” if she were able to express her ideas to the full:

#### THE SOUL’S EXPRESSION

With stammering lips and insufficient sound  
I strive and struggle to deliver right  
That music of my nature, day and night  
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,  
And only answering all the senses round  
With octaves of a mystic depth and height  
Which step out grandly to the infinite  
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.  
This song of soul I struggle to outbear  
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,  
And utter all myself into the air;  
But if I did it, as the thunder-roll  
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,  
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

"The struggle to apprehend"—and Poe could well have said the struggle to express — "the supernal Loveliness — this struggle on the part of the souls fittingly constituted—has given to the world all that which is [the world] has ever been enabled at once to understand and feel as poetic."<sup>48</sup>

The poet's expression, even though it is painfully never to the full, is a safety-valve both to himself and to us. The poet's expression is thus a natural antidote for his own "poetic madness." "Poetry is the lava of the imagination," said Byron, "whose eruption prevents the earthquake. They say poets never or rarely go mad—but [they] are generally so near it that I cannot help thinking rhyme is so far useful in anticipating and preventing the disorder." "It comes over me in a kind of rage every now and then—and then, if I don't write to empty my mind, I go mad."<sup>49</sup> "My passions raged . . . like so many devils till they got vent in rhyme, and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed 'all into quiet.'"<sup>50</sup> When poetically moved, "I kittle up my rustic reed, it gives me ease," said Burns.<sup>51</sup> I resorted, said Goethe, to "converting whatever rejoiced or worried or otherwise concerned me into a poem and so have done with it, and thus at once to correct my conception of outward things and to set my mind at rest." "Poetry," said Cardinal Newman, "is a means of relieving the overburdened mind; it is a channel through which emotion finds expression, and that a safe, regulated expression." Poetry, said John Keble, accomplishes "thus a cleansing, as Aristotle would word it, of

<sup>48</sup> Poe's *The Poetic Principle*.

<sup>49</sup> Byron's Letter to Moore, quoted in Carpenter's *Selections from Byron*, page xxii.

<sup>50</sup> Burns's Epistle to W. Simson.

<sup>51</sup> Letter to Moore.

the sick soul."<sup>52</sup> The function of the creative mind—of the poet especially!—is to represent the imaginary fulfillment of both the poet's and our own ungratified wishes and desires. Thus, as it were, Shakespeare keeps from going mad by writing *Hamlet*; and we find outlet for our own pent-up thoughts and emotions by reading a poem that, for us, expresses those identical thoughts and emotions.

It is because the poetic mind is so highly emotional that both the poetic mind and its product, poetry, are so effectively exalting. "A poet," says Shelley, "is a nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of the unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why."<sup>53</sup> Aristotle has rightly told us that "a listener is always in sympathy with an emotional speaker, even though what he says is wholly worthless."<sup>54</sup> Strong emotion in a speaker provokes corresponding emotion in us. We are lifted to emotional heights by a poem because the poet, in composing that poem, was lifted to emotional heights in his endeavor to express himself to the full. We are entranced, as in an exalting vision, because the poet has lifted himself to the heights of human emotional activity approaching the superhuman. Milton, in his sonnet, "On His Blindness," expressing his reaction to his service in the course of English liberty, rose to the supreme and comforting height—

What supports me, dost thou ask?

<sup>52</sup> These parallel expressions are quoted in Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, 271. Cf. *In Memoriam*, v, xii, xcvi.

<sup>53</sup> *Defense of Poetry* (Winstanley's *Belles Lettres* Series edition), page 16.

<sup>54</sup> *Rhetoric*, III, 7.



The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied  
In liberty's defence.

And Browning, in "Rabbi Ben Ezra," having put his very all into life and yet having failed, likewise rose above the heights:

For thence—a paradox  
Which comforts while it mocks—  
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:  
What I aspired to be  
And was not, comforts me.

"Poets," says Shelley, "are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the swords which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves; poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."<sup>18</sup> Like the religious saint and the philosophical thinker, the poet is carried by his feeling into a new mental state, out to the "fringed edge of nothing," as were Shelley and Keats, into a heightened rapture in which his imagination is freed to pure exaltation. Swinburne caught the gleam for us and expressed it in "Hertha":

A creed is a rod,  
A crown is of night;  
But this thing is God,  
To be man with thy might,  
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as  
a light.

<sup>18</sup> *Defence of Poetry*, Winstanley's edition, 53.

Great poetry always will put us into a frame of mind where we, of our own accord, could not find ourselves; the poetic mind and its product, poetry, are exalting.

We need not urge that those whom we specifically classify as poets are not the sole possessors of the poetic mind; nor do creative artists as a group have any monopoly upon the poetic and creative experience. The feeling that arises when we are unable to express to the full our reactions to a beautiful sunset or to a heroic deed or to an act of friendship or to a noble idea is an experience common to most men. "All of us are poets in a measure because all of us have feeling and power to communicate what we feel to others; but those we call poets are at once more sensitive, with a wider range of feeling, and better able to express what they feel, and move others to share their feelings. To speak in metaphor, the senses of their souls are more numerous and more acute and their voices have a greater compass than in common man. All of us, for example, see dimly, as a half-blind man sees a light, beauty in a hill or a cloud or a primrose; but the poet sees it as a radiant glow that moves him to cry aloud with delight and so to make us also look again more earnestly to share his vision. We hear, as a deaf man is conscious of a voice, the echo of music in running water; but he hears the full melody and calls to us to listen more intently that we too may catch it. We all have wondered vaguely at the mystery and the majesty of the stars, but he falls on his face before them and priest-like prays us, as many as hear him, to accompany him to the throne of heavenly grace, and to say after him words that once spoken are felt to be the only ones worthy, yet such as we ourselves could never have found."<sup>88</sup> The great poetic genius is he who, to paraphrase

<sup>88</sup> Lamborn's *The Rudiments of Criticism*, page 10.

words of Emerson, says with rare good grace what we ourselves have thought and felt all the while but have not had the ability to express. "The poetic madness," which is experienced to a more or less degree by everyone, "is a high degree of emotional disturbance arising from unsatisfied desire. . . ." This disturbance always causes some uncertainty or suspension of rational thought and action. The emotion passion, or madness leads, . . . to a spontaneous imaginative thought, to vision. The irrationality, then, may be temporary or prolonged, mild or violent. . . . But the irrationality is so common, often so temporary, so much like that of the lover, and in many ways so beneficent that we must consider it in large part a natural and healthful condition of the human mind."<sup>67</sup> "All of us are poets," said Carlyle, "when we read as poetically as we can." The poetic mind is, at times, the common experience of every normal human being. With Hazlitt and Emerson, Keats, in his *The Fall of Endymion* (ll. 11-15), could say to us,

Who alive can say,

"Thou art no Poet—mayst not tell thy dreams?"

Since every man whose soul is not a clod

Hath visions, and would speak, if he had loved,

And been well nurtured in his mother tongue

Every poem that has ever been written, we may conclude, is, then, but a feeble shadow of the poetic impulse that produced it. Whatever else the poet may do, his instinctive impulse is ever to express himself fully, and to express himself sincerely. This is always his urge. There can be no charlatanism, said Sainte-Beuve, in the creative mind. The

<sup>67</sup> Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, page 268.

call from afar, or the urge from within, is strong, but the ability to utter adequately is weak. "✓... but when composition begins inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original composition of the poet."<sup>88</sup> Frequently there is nothing more distressing to the artist than the feeling that he has expressed all that he could say and that he could not improve it further. He is no longer aware of the impelling desire to express his thoughts; the creative urge has spent its force. It is related that Thorwaldsen, the Danish sculptor, on completing and unveiling his famous "Christ," actually fell to weeping. When asked by friends why he wept so, whether or not from sheer joy, he replied, "My genius is decaying." "What do you mean?" they asked. "This statue," said he, "is the first of my work that I have ever felt completely satisfied with. Till now the ideal has always been far beyond what I could execute, but it is so no longer. I can never create a great work of art again."✓Trelawney recounts that once he found Shelley, in a heightened and sustained emotional mood, alone in a wood near Pisa with the manuscript of one of his lyrics: "It was a frightful scrawl, words smeared out with his fingers, and one upon another, over and over in tiers, and all run together in the most admired disorder. . . . On my observing this to him, he answered, 'When my brain gets heated with a thought, it soon boils, and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off. In the morning when cooled down, out of the rude sketch, as you justly call it, I shall attempt a drawing.'"<sup>89</sup> Obviously these

<sup>88</sup> Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* (Winstanley's edition), page 49.

<sup>89</sup> John Addington Symonds' *Shelley*, page 166.

rude scrawls did not express all that was in Shelley's mind when in the creative mood; and we may rest certain that when, on the morrow, he made the final version of his lyric there was still further loss from the original poetic substance. He had yet to find a language for his vision, to frame it into our conventional poetic form, to give it exalting habitation in a world of prose. Far more was there in Shelley's heart than he could find expression for in the finished lyric. "The fifth canto of Dante," said Keats, "pleases me more and more; it is that one in which he meets with Paul and Francesca. . . . I tried a Sonnet on it: there are fourteen lines in it but nothing of what I felt."<sup>60</sup>

And, of course, it is just so much untruth to assert that creative minds—poets in particular—have no keen mentality, that they have no ideas. Quite the contrary is the fact. Even a prejudiced and purely prosaic mind willingly would accord to Dante or to Shakespeare some of the profoundest ideas the world has known. Most of us are using their thoughts constantly and are not even aware that we are doing so. We are highly ungrateful about it all. It must not be thought that the poet is necessarily of a mental fiber weaker than others. On the contrary, he is attuned much more sensitively to ideas and thoughts; and, being sensitively attuned, he recognizes values instantly and arrives at conclusions much more quickly—effortless and spontaneous as it seems—and appears to jump over the actual processes of reasoning. Thus it is that "the difference between poetry and prose rests, . . . upon a difference in the nature of the two mental processes: in poetry the intellectual content is furnished by the process of direct apprehension, or immediate understanding;

<sup>60</sup> Milnes's *Life and Letters of John Keats*.

in prose it is furnished largely by indirect comprehension, or judgment and reflective thought."<sup>81</sup> "Genius," in any activity of human endeavor, "begins where intellect ends; or takes by storm where intellect has to make elaborate approaches according to rules of scientific strategy."<sup>82</sup> It is not that the poet cannot and does not give any energy to "practical thinking"; but he can quickly pass over this and devote his efforts to evaluating the precept or conclusion and give attention to "meditation" about the conclusion and even indulge "reverie." All creative minds—and most normal human beings are in more or less degree creative—have these moments of passing over logical processes and entering periods of meditation and reverie. "The poet lives, not constantly of course, but more frequently than ordinary men, in a world of his imagination; he is a seer; he has a gift of vision."<sup>83</sup> There is more than a grain of truth in Oscar Wilde's epigram: "Most people become bankrupt through having invested too heavily in the prose of life. To have ruined one's self over poetry is an honor." All too frequently it is *we* who do not have the intellect to detect the ideas of the poet, or else we are rather too prone to react exclusively to the emotions which accompany their expression and thus, unwittingly, we blind ourselves to their presence in the very poem we are reading. And perhaps, says George Bernard Shaw, "If a great man could make us understand him we should hang him." The truth is our great poets have never been wanting in ideas or

<sup>81</sup> Lotspēich's "Poetry, Prose and Rhythm," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXVII, 296. See also Scott's "The Most Fundamental Differentia of Poetry and Prose," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XIX, 250 ff.

<sup>82</sup> Sir Leslie Stephens' *Hours in a Library*, III, 5.

<sup>83</sup> Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, page 15.

in wisdom. James Russell Lowell, poet, critic, and man of international thought in his day, in "Columbus," said:

And I believed the poets; it is they  
Who utter wisdom from the central deep,  
And listening to the inner flow of things  
Speak to the age out of eternity.

The creative impulse, as we have seen, is organic; that is, it resides in the neural adaptive conduct in human beings. It comes from within, not miraculously from without. Nor is it mental derangement and degeneracy. The instinctive tendency is to express incoming sensory impressions via motor expressions in some sort of objective muscular activity. When this expression is hindered or impeded—what the organic reason for this interesting status may be, our psychologists are not able, in the light of their present inadequate knowledge, more than to hint—we experience emotion. The more unable we are to express ourselves to the full, the stronger the emotion. It is when ideas, precepts, and sensations are thus expressed that we get a creative product—art, poetry! All real poetry is strongly emotional, and therefore highly exalting. Most normal human beings have poetic capacity in varying degrees, the poet, of course, in high degree. Poetry is a safety-valve for both poet and public. A poem, at its best, is only a feeble shadow of the poetic impulse that gave birth to it. Fortunate it is for us that the poet cannot self-express himself unimpeded to the full, exploding, as it were, his ideas, precepts, and sensations into the void. Were he to do this, he would experience no poetry and we should have no poem.

For, let us keep in mind, poetry begins in emotions and ends in emotions;<sup>66</sup> that is, the reader must himself be moved

<sup>66</sup> Fairchild's *The Making of Poetry*, page 6.

in his heart before the creative product is actually a poem to him. No poet is an entity wholly to himself; he does not stand alone and removed but ever in the presence of other men. His instinctive desires are met by the demand of what sociologists are wont to call the herd. These demands—all that poetic conventions imply, and even language itself—are impediments and restrictions to his expressing himself to the full. In addition to his organic inability ever to express himself fully, he has to face the social control of his creative impulse. Poetic art, as we see it on the printed page or as we hear it read, for example, belongs mainly to this social control. Always the creative poet must make some sort of adjustment: the individual poet like Walt Whitman, in whom the poetic urge was very strong, makes one kind of compromise but is always revolting against any kind of control; the conventional poet like Pope, in whom the poetic impulse was rather weak, makes another kind of compromise and almost slavishly follows the conventions and conforms to control. In any instance the poet is not free merely to express himself—he must also communicate himself. Until the poet has led his reader to think what he (the poet) thinks, to appreciate what he appreciates, and to feel what he feels, he has not yet created a work of art. Such art would be little more than mere self-expression; it would be abortive: it would not be self-communication. Communication, after all, must be the objective of any real poetic utterance. The creative poet must get his idea and emotion over effectively to his reader; otherwise he will not have achieved the high calling of the creative artist. “The man,” says Emerson, “is only half himself; the other half is his expression.”

<sup>66</sup> See the author's *Effective Writing*, page 11.






## CHAPTER II

### THE THEME OF A POEM

#### THE UNDERLYING EMOTION

N POETIC art—or in creative literary art of any kind—it is the reader and not the writer that is the target to be hit. Poetry especially is one of the the most highly social of the arts: there is direct reciprocity between author and public. The poet, as we have seen, must not only express himself but must also communicate himself. We are concerned only mildly with the inner operations of his creative mind but we are mightily concerned with his finished product that we read. True, Walter Savage Landor asserted, “There is delight in singing, tho’ none hear.” Such self-expression may be “surcease from sorrow” for the poet, but it is not yet poetry for the reader. The social control of the public demands something more: it requires that the poet shall put his expression in such form that the reader may recognize, understand, and feel his art product. “He who shall simply sing—he, I say,” said Poe, “has yet failed to prove his divinity.” “The work of art,” maintained Oscar Wilde in one of his pithy epigrams, “is to

dominate the spectator. The spectator is not to dominate art." "Every poet must aim to make a poet of his reader." "During the hour of perusal," held Poe, "the soul of the reader is at the writer's control." One more bit of testimony may be cited: "The function of composition," writes Conrad Aiken, virile poet and critic, "is to satisfy the composer. The function of art [that which has been composed] is to satisfy the audience." A poem, as an art product, is not a poem until it has reached and moved the mind and heart of the one who peruses. Whatever be the nature of the poet's act of creating, from this point of view of social control, it is his function and his obligation to lead his reader to think what he (the author) thinks, to sense and appreciate what he senses and appreciates, and to feel what he feels.<sup>2</sup> That it should communicate genuine emotion is the first requisite of poetry, that this emotion should be given direction by the truth of some underlying idea is the second requisite; and that the combination of the two should be moving and exalting in their effect on the reader is the third.

That creative functioning of any kind, as pointed out in the foregoing chapter, is always accompanied by strong emotion needs no long argument. It is an accepted psychological precept. Emotion, we have seen, is a state of organism. "Anger," for instance, "is a state of organism, or a state of the individual, rather than simply a state of mind." Emotion results when the human organism is consciously impeded in its adaptive conduct in the nerve cells. "We shall have a more comprehensive definition, then, if we substitute 'state of the individual' for 'state of mind,' and say that emotion

<sup>1</sup> Spingarn's *Creative Criticism*, page 117.

<sup>2</sup> See the author's *Effective Writing*, chapters i, ii.

is a stirred-up state of the individual.”<sup>3</sup> “I assert for myself,” said William Blake, “that I do not behold the outward creation, and that it is to me a hindrance and not action. ‘What,’ it will be questioned, ‘when the sun rises do you not see a round disc of fire something like a guinea?’ ‘Oh! No, No! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!’”<sup>4</sup> In his motor expression of his neural reaction to the sensory impressions coming from his perception of sunrise, Blake’s whole being, his entire physiological organism taken as a unit, in its adaptive activity, was suffused with this emotion of supreme exaltation. We are “to recognize that all bodily changes of any species of animals which we call ‘expressions of emotions’ are adaptations of the body to the modes of instinctive activity proper to its species. Each mode of instinctive activity requires, for its most efficient execution, the co-operation of all the parts and organs of the body; for, as we have seen, an instinctive action is essentially a ‘total reaction, and the processes of every part of the body are subordinated to, and adapted to aid or supplement, the actual movements of limbs, or other parts, which immediately contribute toward the attainment of the natural goal.’”<sup>4</sup> The creative mood, then, is distinctively one of emotion rather than one of abstract thought; it is one in which all the other adaptive activities of the organisms are not only subordinate but actually convergent to supporting the one dominant functioning. The entire organism of the creative poet is all “keyed up” emotionally. This emotion is the essential thing that the poet, first of all, communicates to us via his poem.

<sup>3</sup> Two passages from Woodworth’s *Psychology, A Study of Mental Life*, page 118.

<sup>4</sup> McDougall’s *Outline of Psychology*, page 321.

It is this emotional quality—soothing, ennobling, exalting when at its best—that is the fundamental theme of a poem.<sup>5</sup>

It is a far cry yet before we can speak as definitely as we should like to speak about our instinctive adaptive activities in the nerve centers and the accompanying emotional states of the human organism. Estheticians<sup>6</sup> have been inclined to consider the subject in the simplified form of that which gives pleasures and that which gives pain. In an illuminating volume,<sup>7</sup> in which he supports the views as presented in Darwin's *Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals*, Professor McDougall of Duke University has developed the background for instincts and emotions and has summarized the whole in his more recent *Outline of Psychology*<sup>8</sup> thus:

NAMES OF INSTINCTS (SYNONYMS IN  
PARENTHESES)

1. Instinct of escape (self-preservation, avoidance of danger)
2. Instinct of combat (aggression, pugnacity)

NAMES OF EMOTIONAL QUALITIES ACCOMPANYING THE INSTINCTIVE ACTIVITIES

1. Fear (terror, fright, alarm, trepidation)
2. Anger (rage, fury, annoyance, irritation, displeasure)

<sup>5</sup> See Malevinsky's *The Science of Playwriting*, chapters v, vi, vii, for the application of this idea to drama. See also Puffer's *The Psychology of Beauty*, chapters ii, iii, and vii ("The Nature of the Emotions of the Drama"), Benedetto Croce's *Aesthetic* (English translation by Douglas Ainslee), chapters i, ii; and the author's *The Technique of the One-Act Play*, chapter iv.

<sup>6</sup> See Marshall's *Esthetics: Pain and Pleasure* and Bosanquet's *History of Esthetic*, Santayana's *The Sense of Beauty*, Puffer's *The Psychology of Beauty*, Guyau's *Problemes de l'esthetique contemporaine*, and Kennedy's *Hegel's Aesthetics*.

<sup>7</sup> McDougall, *Social Psychology* (1923).

<sup>8</sup> Page 324, footnote. In the same work, pages 442-485, he discusses the James-Lange theory of emotion, for which see James's *Psychology*, Vol. II, chapters xxiv, xxv.

## INSTINCTS

3. Repulsion (repugnance)
4. Parental (protection)
5. Appeal
6. Pairing (mating, reproduction, sexual)
7. Curiosity (inquiry, discovery, investigation)
8. Submission (self-abasement)
9. Assertion (self-display)
10. Social or gregarious instinct
11. Food-seeking (hunting)
12. Acquisition (hoarding instinct)
13. Construction
14. Laughter

## EMOTIONAL QUALITIES

3. Disgust (nausea, loathing, repugnance)
4. Tender emotion (love, tenderness, tender feeling)
5. Distress (feeling of helplessness)
6. Lust (sexual emotion or excitement, sometimes called love—an unfortunate, confusing usage)
7. Curiosity (feeling of mystery, of strangeness, of the unknown, wonder)
8. Feeling of subjection (of inferiority, of humility, of attachment, of submission, negative self-feeling)
9. Elation (feeling of superiority, of masterfulness, of pride, of domination, positive self-feeling)
10. Feeling of loneliness, of isolation, nostalgia
11. Appetite or craving in narrow sense (gusto)
12. Feeling of ownership, of possession (protective feeling)
13. Feeling of creativeness, of making, of productivity
14. Amusement (jollity, carelessness, relaxation)

In due time, no doubt, this classification will be even more simplified, at least to the end that the items will be grouped

under fewer heads. For the present it serves our immediate purpose to know that our psychologists consider emotions to be an organic status quo and that this status quo is the result of unstable equilibrium in the adaptive activities in the nerve centers.

While truly it is quite beyond the ken of mortal mind to list all the basic human emotions with their gradations, and even though our estheticians and our psychologists are agreed upon no simplified classification, it is in point that we set down some few of the emotions that the human organism is heir to, some one of which may be the theme, the underlying and dominant emotion of a poem taken as a whole. You, perhaps, may choose to group them as to (1) pleasant or painful, (2) active or passive, (3) attractive or repulsive, (4) debasing or exalting, (5) altruistic or selfish, or (6) what not.

Affection	Admiration	Anguish	Ambition
Anxiety	Anger	Aspiration	Audacity
Bravery	Bewilderment	Bigotry	Benevolence
Bullying	Bragging	Brazenness	Blandishment
Calmness	Chastity	Charity	Chivalry
Constancy	Curiosity	Cynicism	Compassion
Contempt	Cowardice	Cheerfulness	Combativeness
Daunt	Devotion	Dejection	Despair
Derision	Distress	Dread	Disdain
Disgust	Depression	Degradation	Dishonor
Envy	Enjoyment	Emulation	Exaltation
Fear	Fury	Fondness	Fidelity
Firmness	Forgiveness	Forlornness	Freedom
Gratefulness	Gallantry	Gentleness	Generosity
Gayety	Guiltiness	Goodness	Glorification

Humility	Happiness	Hate	Hauteur
Horror	Honor	Helplessness	Humor
Irony	Idealism	Ingratitude	Indignation
Intolerance	Integrity	Intrepidity	Impiousness
Jealousy	Joy	Justice	Jocularly
Kindness	Knavery	Kingliness	
Love	Loyalty	Longing	Lamentation
Mercy	Modesty	Malice	Misery
Melancholia	Madness	Majesty	Motherhood
Nobility	Niggardliness	Nostalgia	Nausea
Odium	Optimism	Obstinacy	Oppression
Piety	Pity	Pride	Patriotism
Pessimism	Purity	Penance	Passion
Reverence	Resignation	Romance	Rebellion
Revenge	Ridicule	Resentment	Remorse
Sadness	Sympathy	Shame	Scorn
Solemnity	Sincerity	Submission	Sacrifice
Tenderness	Terror	Tenacity	Tyranny
Virtue	Vigor	Vanity	Victory
Weakness	Worry	Wishing	Wonder
Yearning	Yieldingness		
Zeal	Zest		

"A good poet," said Whitman, "draws his own audience slowly from the ages and from all the zones. He has a word to say that nobody else can say for him to them, that nobody else even wants to say in just the same way." And Shelley held that "poetry ever addresses itself to those faculties which are the last to be destroyed." The most fundamental things in human organic existence are the emotions. Every good poem has as its heart some one underlying emotion. It is this emotion within the poem that makes it poetry.

Let us not, in our critical approach to poetry, forget that, quite contrary to the impression that obtains in many minds, we, as human organisms, live in terms of our emotional experiences far more than we realize or are willing to admit. This state of affairs is not to be accredited alone to the supposed prevalence of "men of ideas" in our social régime today; on the contrary, a cautious and timid unwillingness to admit that we are emotionally moved is a racial characteristic of the Nordic, of the Anglo-Saxon. If not actually ashamed of our deep emotions, we are at least apologetic: the masculine Anglo-Saxon thinks that emotions are all right for women and children but are quite to the discredit of a man. And yet, as evidence that the Anglo-Saxon is a human organism that does experience the deepest of emotions and does express them, we need go no farther than to English poetry itself. Actually we are blinded to our own emotional natures and are constantly looking beyond us rather than in our own hearts for the significant elements of our everyday existence.

It is said that over the fireplace in his musty London attic where he lived by choice rather than from compulsion, Oliver Goldsmith had written with an ember, "*What is finer than old wine—old books—old friends!*" Obviously Goldsmith's tender memories, his loved associations, his longing for the things near and dear to him were at the heart of his actual living. Except as our attention is directed to it, we are not always aware that we live so much in terms of the friendships we cherish, the conducts we admire, the haunts we love, the associations—whether personal, social, or business—we encourage. Indeed, if we eliminate any and every emotion from the human entity, little would remain but the husk of an organism of the lowest status, really an inarticu-



late and almost functionless thing. Conceive of someone devoid of joy, of ambition, of yearning, of fear, of affection, of sorrow, of hate, of any emotion we might name—such a human being, to all intents, would be nonexistent. Emotion is life. Life is emotion. And poetry is life—is emotion! It will avail us very little if we—as did Doctor Johnson long ago when he pounded his walking-stick testily on the pavement and thought thus he had refuted Berkeley's conviction that the world was merely our ideas and precepts—try to escape from our emotional life and insist that abstract ideas and cold thinking are the stuff out of which existence is made. Such a life would be

Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,  
Dead perfection, no more.

True it is we have abstract ideas and indulge logical thinking; we are proud of possessing them; indeed we have a guilty feeling that we are not quite "up to scratch" if we are lacking in them and especially if we seemingly do not have the aptitude to apply them efficiently to life's emergencies. Notwithstanding, the plain psychological fact is that, while we may make a million or earn our daily bread by our cold intellects, our really vital life is in terms of our joys and sorrows, our victories and defeats, our successes and our failures.<sup>9</sup> Whether we recognize it or not, whether we are willing to admit it or not, "Men want to be made to feel, not made to think."<sup>10</sup>

Critics and poets alike hold that poetry is essentially emotional both in its content and in its effect. "I never heard

<sup>9</sup> See McDougall's *Social Psychology*.

<sup>10</sup> Lamborn's *The Rudiments of Criticism*, page 7.

the old song of *Percy and Douglas*," said the genteel Sir Philip Sidney, "that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet."<sup>11</sup> "There is certainly some connection between love, music, and poetry," wrote the warm-hearted Burns, "and, therefore, I have always thought it a fine touch of nature, that passage in a modern love-composition:

'As towards her cottage jogg'd along,  
Her name was frequent in his song.'

For my own part I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet till I got heartily in love, and then rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart. The following composition ["Once I Lov'd a Bonnie Lass"] was the first of my performances, and done at an early period of my life when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity; unacquainted, and uncorrupted with the ways of a wicked world . . . but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it, but my heart melts, my blood sallies at the remembrance."<sup>12</sup> "But the heart knows that the lines are poetry *because it is moved by them*. This is the final test of poetry, that it communicate a mood. There is the artist's function, it has little or nothing to do with intellect, for it presents not ideas but images that produce in us a definite state of feeling but has no meaning that can be expressed in intellectual conception, . . . [poetry], too, is Apollo's, not Minerva's, child."<sup>13</sup> "But that poetry is not a means of supplying useful

<sup>11</sup> *An Apologue for Poetry*.

<sup>12</sup> On "Songs and Song Writing" in Burns's *Scrap Book*. If anyone has any doubt about Burns being a conscious workman in his poetry, it would be illuminating to read his own criticisms of his "first" poem in this *Scrap Book*.

<sup>13</sup> Lamborn's *The Rudiments of Criticism*, pages 118-119.

information or of training the memory—except to learn more poetry—or improving the morals, or providing sage axioms or grammatical examples, or serving any practical purpose, let us with joy admit and declare. It is the charm and the glory of poetry that its height and single purpose is ‘to make glad the heart of man.’”<sup>14</sup> “It [poetry] is not a branch of authorship: it is ‘the stuff of which our life is made.’ The rest is ‘mere oblivion,’ a dead letter: for all that is worth remembering in life is the poetry of it. Fear is poetry, hope is poetry, love is poetry, habit is poetry; contempt, jealousy, remorse, admiration, wonder, pity, despair, or madness, are all poetry.”<sup>15</sup> “It is not,” wrote Chevalier De Mére, wit of the age of Louis XIV, in a letter to the Secretary of the French Academy, “for the purpose of deciding on the merit of this noble poet [Virgil], nor of harming his reputation, that I have spoken so freely concerning him. The public will continue to think what it does of his beautiful verses, and as for me, I judge nothing, I only say what I think, and what effect each of these things produces on my heart and mind.” “One request I must make of my reader,” wrote Wordsworth in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, “that is, that in judging these poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgment of others. . . . Let the reader then decide, independently, by his own feelings, and, if he finds himself affected, let him not suffer such conjectures to interfere with his pleasure.” “. . . The great thing,” suggested Matthew Arnold, “for us is to feel and enjoy his work as deeply as ever we can, and to appreciate the wide difference between it

<sup>14</sup> Lamborn's *The Rudiments of Criticism*, page 122.

<sup>15</sup> Hazlitt's "On Poetry in General."

and all work which is not the same high character," and "no one can tell him how Homer affected the Greeks; but there are those who can tell him how Homer affects them."<sup>16</sup>

Robert Burns, poet by nature that he was, knew that poesy was essentially emotional in content and in effect. He knew, also, that it was not sufficient that the poet merely express himself; he knew that he must also communicate himself—not his ideas, not his abstractions, but primarily his emotions. He knew that he must "touch the heart" of his reader, else he would have written his poem to no effective end.

I am nae Poet, in a sense,  
But just a Rhymer like by chance  
An' hae to learning nae pretence;  
Yet what the matter?  
Whene'er my Muse does on me glance,  
I jingle at her.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,  
And say, "How can you e'er propose,  
You wha ken hardly verse frae prose,  
To make a sang?"  
But, by your leave, my learned foes,  
Ye're may be wrang.

What's a' your jargon o' your schools,  
Your Latin names for horns an' stools?  
If honest nature made you fools,  
What sairs your grammars?  
Ye'd better ta'en up spades and shoofs,  
Or knappin-hammers.

<sup>16</sup> Arnold's *The Study of Poetry and On Translating Homer*.

A set o' dull, conceited hashers  
 Confuse their brains in college classes!  
 They gang in stirks and come out asses,  
     Plain truth to speak;  
 An' syne they think to climb Parnassus  
     By dint o' Greek<sup>1</sup>

Gie me ae spark; Nature's fire,  
 That's a' the lea'ning I desire;  
 Then, tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire  
     At pleugh or cart,  
 My Muse, though hamely in attire,  
     May touch the heart.<sup>17</sup>

The fundamental theme of every good poem is, then, some one dominant emotion that pervades the whole. "The poet," says Sara Teasdale, contemporary writer of our finest love lyrics, "should try to give his poem the swiftness of flame so that the reader will feel and not think while he is reading. But the thinking will come afterwards." A moving underlying emotion, not an abstract idea, is the first essential of the poet's product. "The day will come," wrote the astutely critical Matthew Arnold, "when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted them [the ideas of philosophy], for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize 'the breath and fine spirit of knowledge' afforded us by poetry."<sup>18</sup> If we will turn to Shelley's immortal poem, "To a Skylark," and read it through carefully, suddenly we close the poem with this final, exalting stanza,

<sup>17</sup> From Burns's "Epistle to Sir John Lapraik."

<sup>18</sup> *The Study of Poetry.*

Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know,  
Such harmonious madness  
From my lips would flow,  
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

This emotion of gladness, this blithesome joy, challenging a host of comparisons, shines through Shelley's poems from first to last. It only culminates in the last stanza and in the last line. Gladness and still more gladness is the pervading emotion of the poem and it is this emotion that is communicated to us. In turn we react to it in terms of our own provoked gladness. This emotion of gladness is the theme of the poem. When we read Charles Kingsley's "Airly Beacon," we become sad, unutterably sad—the weary loneliness in the last three lines can leave no doubt in the mind as to the mood of the lass—and accordingly the emotion of sadness is its theme:

## AIRLY BEACON

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;  
O the pleasant sight to see  
Shires and towns from Airly Beacon,  
While my love climb'd up to me!

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;  
O the happy hours we lay  
Deep in fern on Airly Beacon,  
Courting through the summer's day!

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;  
O the weary haunt for me,  
All alone on Airly Beacon,  
With his baby on my knee!

When we read from Tennyson,

As thro' the land at eve we went,  
 And pluck'd the ripen'd ears,  
 We fell out, my wife and I,  
 O, we fell out, I know not why,  
 And kiss'd again with tears.  
 And blessings on the falling out  
 That all the more endears,  
 When we fall oft with those we love  
 And kiss again with tears!  
 For when we came where lies the child  
 We lost in other years,  
 There above the little grave,  
 O, there above the little grave,  
 We kiss'd again with tears.<sup>19</sup>

we may, if we read too carelessly, get the impression that the underlying emotion is also sadness as in the instance of "Airly Beacon." If, however, we read the poem aright, we shall detect that the prevailing emotion of happiness is present; it is not sorrow at the death of the child—it may be remarked incidentally that the love of the child is the keynote in each of the intercalary lyrics of *The Princess* and that the child is what breaks down the artificial barriers to the princess' heart at the close of the poem—but the happiness of the husband at being reunited with the woman he loves—supreme and exalting happiness, intensified and mel-  
lowed by the sadness of parental affection over the grave of the dead child. That emotion of happiness is the theme of the poem. In Walt Whitman's delicate "The Imprisoned Soul," the emotion of infinite tenderness in his attitude toward death is the theme.

<sup>19</sup> *The Princess*, Part I, the intercalary lyric.

THE IMPRISONED SOUL

At the last, tenderly,  
From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,  
From the clasp of the knitted locks—from the keep of the well-  
closed doors,  
Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;  
With the key of softness unlock thy locks—with a whisper  
Set open the doors, O soul!

Tenderly! be not impatient!  
(Strong is your hold, O mortal flesh!  
Strong is your hold, O love!)

And when we read the vigorous Anglo-Saxon spirited poem, "A Consecration," by John Masefield, there obtains a proud and frank loyalty to the common man whose supreme lot it has been to taste the depths of life. This moving emotion of proud and frank loyalty is the theme of "A Consecration." The first stanza provides the keynote.

Not of the princes and prelates with periwigged charioteers  
Riding triumphantly laurelled to lap the fat of the years,  
Rather the scorned—the rejected—the men hemmed in with the  
spears,

A careful study to determine the specific emotions underlying a group of representative English lyrics will not be energy spent in vain. On the contrary, the theme of a poem is a "first aid" to rapid appreciation; frequently, too, we shall discover, sometimes to our very amazement, that the underlying emotion of a poem is entirely different from what we may have thought; and, in any case, if we wish to read a poem in the emotional mood in which the author wrote



it and intended it should be read, unless we know its dominant emotional value, we can scarcely read the poem appreciatively. Let us remember that art is to dominate the reader, not the reader dominate art. Accordingly, when we analyze a group of representative well-known poems, we are forcibly struck by the fact that each one does have a dominating and underlying emotion that gives a singleness of effect to each one. Note: Kipling's "Recessional," humility; Shelley's "Invictus," unconquerableness; Burns's "A Red, Red Rose," constancy; Arnold's "The Forsaken Merman," loneliness; Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain," anguish; Poe's "Annabel Lee," love; Hood's "The Bridge of Sighs," compassion; Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," yearning; Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," desire; Blake's "The Tiger," fear; Milton's "Il Penseroso," pensiveness; Lovelace's "To Lucasta, on Going to the War," honor; Herrick's "To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time," playfulness; Wordsworth's "Daffodils," delight; Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," animation; Shakespeare's "Under the Greenwood Tree," contentment; Ben Jonson's "To Celia," tenderness; Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," meditation; Byron's "The Isles of Greece," revolt; Tennyson's "Ulysses," Anglo-Saxon vigor; Tennyson's "Song of the Lotos-Eaters," lassitude; Browning's "My Last Duchess," egotism; Swinburne's "Hertha," egotism; Anglo-Saxon "Deor's Lament," resolution; "Twenty-third Psalm," confidence. Singleness of emotional effect is the prerequisite to every product that can lay claim to consideration as a work of art—poem, painting, statue, piece of music, drama<sup>20</sup>—there is no exception.

<sup>20</sup> An examination of representative plays shows the presence of some one dominant emotion. *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, jealousy; *The*

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that every genuine creative poetic impulse and every genuine poem has one and only one dominant and underlying emotion in it. Earlier in the chapter, it was pointed out that, in every adaptive activity in the nerve centers of the human organism, all other adaptations not only become subordinate but actually convergent to the attainment of the main goal. That is, in neural adaptive conduct the tendency is to indulge one major adaptation at a time. This means that there is *but one dominant emotion indulged at a given time*. It follows that, in a given creative functioning, a singleness of emotional tone would characterize both the act and the finished product. "An adaptive act," says Carr, "is continued until certain effects are attained that operate to terminate the act"; that is, our adaptive activities, and of course the accompanying emotions, are somewhat "single tracked." "Although an individual can react to any aspect of his complex sensory environment," Carr continues, "yet he usually adapts to but one aspect at a time. [He can, of course, by exercise of his will, answer questions and dictate a letter at the same time.] This type of conduct is the exception, however; a single response is the rule. The unitary character of our responses is due in large part to the fact that the majority of our adaptive reactions involve a movement of the organism as a whole in relation to the external world, and naturally only one re-

*Servant in the House*, hypocrisy (the Bishop, not Manson, furnishes the keynote); *Magda*, tyranny, *A Doll's House*, imprudence, *Hamlet*, melancholy, *Richelieu*, ambition, *Ghosts*, dread; *Michael and His Lost Angel*, penance, *Beyond Human Power*, faith; *The Vale of Content*, longing, *The Red Robe*, torture, *The Wild Duck*, innocence; *Cyrano de Bergerac*, sacrifice; *Old English*, independence; *Othello*, blasted faith, *Oedipus Rex*, terror; *Job*, revolt. Many, perhaps all, of our best novels and short stories can be similarly analyzed to advantage.

sponse of this sort can be made at a time. Practically the entire musculature of the body is either directly or indirectly involved in such a simple act as putting on one's shoes."<sup>21</sup> Psychologically speaking, a given dominant emotion not only is simplified but it is also relatively brief in its duration; that is, there is a "unity," a "concise totality," a "sustained oneness," a "singleness of effect." "But all excitements," says Poe, "are, through psychical necessity, transient. The degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. After the lapse of an hour, at the very utmost, it flags—it fails—a revulsion ensues—and then the poem is, in effect, and in fact, no longer such. On the other hand, it is clear that a poem may be improperly brief. Undue brevity degenerates into mere epigrammism. A very short poem, while now and then producing a brilliant or vivid, never produces a profound and enduring, effect. There must be a steady pressing down of the stamp upon the wax." "I hold that a long poem does not exist," continues Poe, "I maintain that the phrase 'a long poem' is simply a contradiction in terms."<sup>22</sup> The lyric creative impulse especially—and hence any lyric poem—is characterized both by (1) singleness of emotional value and by (2) brevity. The presence of such a singleness of emotion in a poem is all-compelling. It is like Sara Teasdale's

Children's faces looking up,  
Holding wonder like a cup.

That it is this very unity of strong emotional functioning in the creative poet's mind that makes for singleness of emo-

<sup>21</sup> Carr's *Psychology, A Study of Mental Activity*, page 75.

<sup>22</sup> Poe's *The Poetic Principle*.

tional effect in a poem needs no further argument or demonstration. "A song-bird must sing clear and true; no false notes," says Hjelmar to Nora in *A Doll's House*. "But every work of art," asserted Poe in his *The True Aims of Poetry*, "should contain within itself all that is requisite for its own comprehension." Francis Palgrave, a rare soul in the appreciation of poetry, in the Preface to his *Golden Treasury*, wrote: "Lyrical has been here held essentially to imply that each poem shall turn on some single thought, feeling, or situation." An art product of any kind, let us not forget, must be concerned with but one impression and one only. A great building, a Greek temple, a world-famed painting, a musical composition, a statue, a fine poem, each has its one dominant and underlying theme. The chief thing that differentiates real art from that which is not art is that the former always has a *singleness of effect*. The Venus de Milo, alone in its salon in the Louvre, is appreciated in terms of its sum total of effect, not in terms of its individual parts as we view them. In perusing a poem, a reader, in his very psychological nature, unconsciously demands something definite, tangible, and complete; he must have something in the poem that he can recognize and appreciate, just as he recognizes and appreciates personality as the essential element in a human being. No poem can claim distinction, as such, unless it has a significant and easily recognized meaning—not in any cheap didactic sense, of course—unless it provokes a definite emotional response and leaves us with a singleness of emotional impression. More poems, by both recognized masters and unrecognized novices, are condemned to oblivion because of their not having a singleness of effect than because of any one other thing! There is no such thing as duality of emotional effect in good poetic art.

## THE UNDERLYING IDEA

Poets and critics alike, as we have seen, are one in urging that the essential value in a poem is its dominant emotion, which must be communicated to the reader. And now a seeming paradox! It is impossible, so our psychologists hold, to describe an emotion in terms of itself, much less to communicate it directly in terms of itself. "What is required, psychology tells us, cannot be done. Feeling can in no case be directly described or defined. Feeling is something that is original and underived. It is not composed of other elements in experience; nor can it be resolved or analyzed into other elements. Unlike most things, it cannot be explained in terms of something else. I cannot describe the feeling that I have as I pass my hand over a piece of silk, or when I touch a cold stone, except in terms of feeling. Jealousy, the dictionary may tell me, is 'the state of being jealous,' but I am really not enlightened by the statement; I can know what jealousy is only by experiencing the feeling itself. I cannot actually describe my joy or my sorrow, my fear or my delight; I can only name the things or events that gave rise to these feelings, with the hope that, by naming the things or events, other people will have a somewhat similar feeling aroused, and so understand mine. Everywhere I have the same experience; I cannot describe or define my feeling, except in terms of feeling, and that is no definition at all."<sup>28</sup> So says Professor Fairchild, who has made a special study of this aspect of poetic expression.

Making specific application of this idea, he continues:

<sup>28</sup> *The Making of Poetry*, 89. Cf. C. M. Lotspeich's "Poetry, Prose, and Rhythm," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXVII, 292-310.

"Nor does the poet, in this respect, have any divinely bestowed advantage. Even he cannot tell us directly what his feeling is. Tennyson, in 'Break, Break, Break,' could not heave his heart into his mouth. He does not tell us directly how he felt. He could not. All he could do was to name objects the sight or sound of which, through images directly or by contrast, gave rise to or were associated with his feeling of loneliness and grief; and, having done this, he can only trust that his reader, calling up appropriate images and grouping them in the manner suggested by the lines, will have a somewhat like feeling aroused. It was evidently because Tennyson realized sharply, almost painfully, his inability to express his feeling directly that he wrote the lines:

And I would that my tongue could utter  
The thoughts that arise in me.

Cowper does not tell us what his feeling is when he writes:

The twentieth year is well-nigh past,  
Since first our sky was overcast,  
Ah, would that this might be the last!  
My Mary!

Nor does Shelley really tell us how he felt, in the lines:

Yet now despair itself is mild,  
Even as the winds and waters are;  
I could lie down like a tired child  
And weep away the life of care  
Which I have borne and yet must bear.

Not even he can tell us directly how he felt; no poet can. For of poetic feeling, as of all other kinds of feeling, it is true not only that, it cannot be described or defined, but that

it cannot even be directly expressed or revealed." (See the chapter below on "The Language of Poetry" for a further discussion of this idea.)

"Poetry," our New England Edwin Arlington Robinson holds, "is a language that tells us, through a more or less emotional reaction, something that cannot be said. All poetry, great or small, does this. And it seems to me that poetry has two outstanding characteristics. One is that it is, after all, indefinable. The other is that it is eventually unmistakable." "If I read a book," asserted Emily Dickinson, whose lyrics possess almost more pure poetry than seemingly they can hold, "and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know. Is there any other way?" Emotional functioning is so normal an aspect of the human organism, whether of poet or of reader of poetry, that few of us, even when strongly moved, are fully aware of its identity and its significance. Frequently all we know is that we *feel*. We have been led to feel not by the poet's direct communication to us of his emotion, but by his presenting to us concrete experiences and pictures which poet and reader have experienced in common and which incite in us his accompanying deep emotion. Concrete experiences in life have led us to develop precepts of life, thoughts, ideas. When we feel deeply we naturally, and somewhat unconsciously, associate that feeling with some thought or idea. To give emphasis to a fundamental emotion in a poem, to bring it definitely and consciously before us, there needs to be a second element in every bit of creative poetic expression—there needs to be a directive idea. The poem really great is the poem that first of all stirs our emotions profoundly and

then gives a meaning and direction to our feeling by the unity and truth of some underlying idea.<sup>24</sup>

The main theme, the underlying emotion, in Longfellow's "Excelsior" is unconquerable aspiration. [Through a series of concrete experiences given in the poem, the author has incited in us this emotion and we function in terms of it: this unconquerable aspiration is the reciprocal emotion that the poem provokes in us.] When we seek to find what there is in this poem that gives this emotion significance and direction, what really emphasizes the singleness of emotional effect in the poem, we detect that it is a precept of life, an underlying thought—"He who strives to his very utmost to achieve his life's ambition, even though he fail in its full attainment, has actually succeeded." This is, of course, an Anglo-Saxon fundamental racial impulse. ". . . the earnest upward striving of the soul—an impulse not to be subdued even in death," said Poe of this poem. When C. K. Tucker-mann wrote Longfellow asking what his intention was in writing the poem, the author replied: "This was no more than to display, in a series of pictures, the life of a man of genius, resisting all temptation, laying aside all fears, heedless of all warning, and pressing right on to accomplish his purpose. His motto is *Excelsior*, 'higher'."<sup>25</sup> Louis Untermeyer, wishing to have us feel his fatalistic vigorous optimism in welcoming the physical struggle of life wrote, on the birth of one of his sons:

<sup>24</sup> On the beauty of ideas, see Puffer's *The Psychology of Beauty*, chapter viii, "The Beauty of Ideas." See the author's *The Technique of the One-Act Play*, chapter iv, "The Theme of the One-Act Play."

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the corresponding underlying ideas, in modified forms of course, in Poe's "Eldorado," Holmes's "The Chambered Nautilus," Lowell's "The Muse," Whittier's "The Vanishers," Lanier's "The Song of the Chattahoochee," Emerson's "The Forerunners."



## ON THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

Lo, to the battle-ground of Life,  
Child, you have come, like a conquering shout,  
Out of a struggle—into strife;  
Out of a darkness—into doubt.

Girt with the fragile armor of youth,  
Child, you must ride into endless wars,  
With the sword of protest, the buckler of truth,  
And a banner of love to sweep the stars.

About you the world's despair will surge,  
Into defeat you must plunge and grope.  
Be to the faltering an urge;  
Be to the hopeless years a hope!

Be to the darkened world a flame;  
Be to its unconcern a blow—  
For out of its pain and tumult you came,  
And into its tumult and pain you go.

The dominant emotion of optimism is intensified and given direction by the underlying idea, "There is no escaping the fact that we are born out of pain and struggle and we have to live in terms of pain and struggle." And wishing, as he has himself told us, "to find a faith in an age of doubtful standards and discarded ideas," he wrote:

## PRAYER

God, though this life is but a wraith,  
Although we know not what we use,  
Although we grope with little faith,  
Give me the heart to fight—and lose.

Ever insurgent let me be,  
Make me more daring than devout;  
From sleek contentment keep me free,  
And fill me with a buoyant doubt.

Open my eyes to visions girt  
With beauty, and with wonder lit—  
But always let me see the dirt,  
And all that spawn and die in it.

Open my ears to music; let  
Me thrill with Spring's first flutes and drums—  
But never let me dare forget  
The bitter ballads of the slums.

From compromise and things half done,  
Keep me with stern and stubborn pride;  
And when at last the fight is won,  
God, keep me still unsatisfied.

Here again he incites in us that vigorous Anglo-Saxon optimism that will not down even in defeat, and then gives especial point to it by the underlying idea, "Ever insurgent let me be" and "God, keep me still unsatisfied."<sup>26</sup>

"There is only one religion," suggests George Bernard Shaw, "though there are a hundred versions of it." There is only one genuine emotion of love, though there are scores of interpretations of it. To Burns alone may be accredited

<sup>26</sup> Cf. this directive idea, likewise in modified forms, in Tennyson's "Wages," Browning's "Prospice," Henley's "Invictus," Kipling's "The Explorer," Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra," and many others.

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a hundred such, each having its dominant emotion of love given special significance by the unity and truth of a different underlying idea. Immortal Poe and immortal Keats—they are in the galaxy of universal poets!—both lived in the realm of beauty! “To Helen” and “Ode on a Grecian Urn” are the very ecstasies of beauty, but the two are not identical: each gave different significance to the same emotion via the differences in their directive underlying ideas in their poems. Just as Browning appreciated Shelley,<sup>27</sup> so Poe’s heart beat in tune with that of Keats: “Of the poets who have appeared most fully instinct with the principle now developed, we may mention Keats as the most remarkable. He is the sole British poet who has never erred in his themes. Beauty is always his aim.”<sup>28</sup> Milton’s “Lycidas,” Shelley’s “Adonais,” Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*, Arnold’s “Thyrsis,” Emerson’s “Threnody” all incite sadness for one dead, but each is given individual significance because of different underlying precepts. Longfellow’s “Hymn to Night,” Collins’ “Ode to Evening,” Blake’s “Night” and Shelley’s “To Night,” likewise, are differently emphasized. Tennyson’s “Crossing the Bar,” Browning’s “Prospice,” Sara Teasdale’s “The Lamp,” and Whitman’s “Darest Thou Now, O Soul” are individually concerned with the presence of death, but no two are interpreted by the same dominant thought. Holmes, Whittier, Stoddard, Sill, Harte, Masters, Robinson, Bynner, Whitman, Fletcher, Mackaye, Hodgson, Lindsay, Oppenheim, Markham, Sandburg, Carman—to men-

<sup>27</sup> “Shelley and the Art of Poetry,” introductory essay to *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 1852. However, the letters proved to be forgeries. The essay is reprinted in Rhys’ *The Prelude to Poetry*, Everyman’s Library Series, pages 256–274.

<sup>28</sup> *The True Asms of Poetry*.

tion only relatively few—have written poems in admiration of Abraham Lincoln, but each has given his emotion a slightly different interpretation. Milton, Mark Akenside, Coleridge, Keats, Arnold, Clough, Bridges, have given us their feelings about the nightingale, but each, in the light of a different interpreting idea, has given individual emphasis to his emotion. Lanier, Whitman, Albert Pike, have written poems about our American mocking-bird, but no two are from quite the same point of view. Émile Zola defined art as “life seen through a temperament.” We might well, in the light of modern psychology, say that art is emotion given direction and significance by the unity and truth of some underlying idea.

Now it is everyone's experience that it is not always so easily determined just what the underlying idea of a given poem is, it is not always so clearly tangible for statement in a single complete sentence; but the idea is there nevertheless and is quite worth finding. Poetry is replete with ideas: it must be so, else, for the most part, it will not be impressive—it will not be art. In his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth tells us that “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,” but he also tells us that “each of these poems has a purpose,” not in an exclusively didactic sense but in an interpretative sense. Pleasure in observing certain aspects of physical nature is the underlying emotion of his “Daffodils”; indeed the pleasure is suggested to us via such delightful pictures of color and movement that we all but lose ourselves in the emotion of pleasure. If we look for the underlying idea, for the moment we may halt. Yet, out of our experience with life we detect that the dominant thought of the poem is: “In our later life, there are moments of meditative quietude when again we re-experience

the delights of an earlier day." If we read Sara Teasdale's "Blue Squills," an ecstatic yearning is incited in us:

BLUE SQUILLS

How many million Aprils came  
Before I ever knew  
How white a cherry bough could be,  
A bed of squills how blue!

And many a light-foot April,  
When life is done with me,  
Will lift the blue flame of the flower  
And the white flame of the tree.

Oh, burn me with your beauty then,  
Oh, hurt me, tree and flower,  
Lest in the end death try to take  
Even this glistening hour.

O shaken flowers, O shimmering trees,  
O sunlit white and blue,  
Wound me, that I through endless sleep  
May bear the scar of you!

The poem is so delicate, so effectively charming, that we may be at a loss to know just what we respond to and just what the underlying thought is. On analysis, however, the idea proves to be, "The recognition of beauty is a moment of such supreme enjoyment that we crave wounds from the things that are so beautiful in order to preserve in us their impression and remembrance forever." Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Arnold's "Philomela," Stevenson's "The Highlands," Alice Meynell's "The Lady of the Lambs," Shelley's "To a Skylark," Bryant's "To a Waterfowl,"

Poe's "Legia," Emerson's "Brahma," all are poems so subtle—to many persons they are all too far away and, as a consequence, to them not poetry at all—so delicately exalting that, even for lovers of poetry sometimes, they seem intangible. "Brahma," in especial, is such a poem. We think we feel its exaltation and try to rise to its supreme height. We are taken far out from this mundane existence into the far "fringed edge of nothing" and there flounder, for the nonce, while we try to detect what it is all about. Analysis of the poem, for its interpretative thought, reveals the far-reaching idea that "Perfect spiritual existence is that in which the soul is totally unaware of any aspect—even in the infinitesimalest degree—of the physical and temporal universe"—an abstract thought that is itself exalting. "*There is one God, and in contemplation of Him the soul becomes of His essence,*" has been an impelling motive to high thinking and feeling from Buddha to Emerson.<sup>29</sup> It is such teachers as Plato, Brahma, and Christ who have had this exalting vision; and for such poets as were these, the world is richer! Recall Emerson's expression of it:

## BRAHMA

If the red slayer think he slays,  
Or if the slain think he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near,  
Shadow and sunlight are the same,  
The vanished gods to me appear,  
And one to me are shame and fame.

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of this esthetic state and of the beauty of ideas, see Ethel Puffer's *The Psychology of Beauty*, chapter iii, "The Aesthetic Repose," and chapter viii, "The Beauty of Idea."

They reckon ill who leave me out;  
When me they fly, I am the wings;  
I am the doubter and the doubt,  
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,  
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;  
But thou, meek lover of the good!  
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

Now we must not deceive or delude ourselves—and here is the grave danger and besetting sin of the novice and amateur and of the “expert” also—into believing that we feel the emotion and detect the directive thought of a poem when in fact we only think we do. Not infrequently we are of the notion that our ideas are clear, that our percepts are distinct and manifest to our own mind; but when we are asked to express them as thus conceived, we are astonished to find ourselves at an utter loss to do so. Often when thus put to the test, we are completely surprised to learn that we actually do not know. Before our ideas can be clear-cut they must have something more than chaos and uncertainty out of which to come. And chaos and uncertainty in the appreciation of poetry is fatal. Vagueness of expression frequently is to be traced directly to vagueness of conception, or to no conception at all. Indeed, in such instances our mind has been not everywhere but simply nowhere. There is no greater pitfall than the delusive phantom of thinking we know the emotion of a poem and also its underlying idea when, in reality, we do not know them.

We have no disposition to reduce creative poetry to any cold and bloodless formula as a basis for its study. Our

desire is quite the contrary. But a poet is either to be understood or not to be understood and certain precepts we are obliged to state with a firmness born of conviction. Obviously we cannot appreciate a given poem if we do not know what it is about, if we do not have a clear conception of its fundamental emotion and its directive idea. Now "happily a certain test for clearness of conception of ideas and emotional values is not far to seek. So long as things are really vague and uncertain in our mind, there is little likelihood that there can be any adequate and clear expression of them. As a matter of fact, the very clearest expression of such vague and uncertain conceptions would be, at best, but expressions of vagueness and uncertainty. Truly it may be said that no idea or impression is actually clear in our mind until we can express that idea in a complete sentence which, when read by another person, will give up the same idea to the mind of the one who reads the sentence. An idea is really not an idea until it is thought out and conceived as a definite, tangible thing that can be stated in a complete sentence. Until in our minds what we wish to express begins to stand out by itself and to assume shape distinct from the complexities around it, we may be reasonably sure that our ideas are still in the making. We shall not go far wrong if we apply the test of a definite and complete sentence to our ideas. If we can express our impressions in terms of a specific and clear-cut sentence which, when read by another, readily gives up that impression, we may be assured that we really are possessed of that impression."<sup>80</sup> It cannot be too strongly urged that, in assuring ourselves we really appreciate and understand a poem, we state the underlying

<sup>80</sup> The author's *Affective Writing*, page xxxv.



emotion in a definite word, and the underlying idea in a simple, direct sentence.<sup>81</sup> We are fully aware that to some, and to those "spirits of the unseen world" (the poets) in particular, the act of determining and stating in a complete sentence the underlying idea of a poem is nothing short of devitalizing, criminal! Our concern, for the nonce, is not for the poet who produced the poem but for the reader who peruses it. For purposes of study and appreciation it is quite to the point that the reader, through careful analysis, shall actually know just to what in the poem he so deeply responds. Indeed, he will not have gone far in the appreciation of poetry until he has become somewhat proficient in doing this very thing.

But a word of warning is here in point! The student of poetry will not make the mistake of confusing the theme or the idea of a poem with the *story* of a poem or its *descriptive subject-matter*, and especially with *didactic moralizing*. Time after time, when a student of poetry is asked to state the theme or the thought of a poem, he utters some moralizing precept which, nearly always, is a deduction from his own limited mind rather than from the poem into which he has read his moralizing precept. Morals are one thing, and moralizing is another. With the latter, the best poetry of the world has not been concerned. A really great poem, as a work of creative art, aims for emotional impression of the

<sup>81</sup> The student could do nothing better than to turn to the *Oxford Book of English Verse* and apply this test to such poems as the following: Nos. 60, 61, 64, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 81, 88, 99, 125, 204, 205, 213, 234, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 244, 246, 248, 251, 258, 260, 269, 275, 281, 285, 343, 346, 348, 436, 493, 499, 501, 503, 524 (sonnet), 528, 529, 530, 532, 533 (sonnet), 543, 548, 549, 563, 564, 567, 608, 610, 651, 652, 654, 658, 669, 689, 695, 697, 752, 754, 760, 763, 787 (sonnet), 819 (sonnet), 848, 856, 860, 869, 883.

reader, not for conviction or conversion. Any poem made to the order of a moralizing precept or philosophical propaganda — and all too many poems have this blot on their scutcheons—is very apt to reveal its source, and that, too, at the expense of its poetic value. All too many of Longfellow's poems have this defect; his popular "The Village Blacksmith" has two stanzas of moralizing at its close, and his "The Psalm of Life" is almost wholly sententious. As a bit of moralizing philosophy it may be good, but as the finer class of poetry it is naught. Poe, in *The True Aims of Poetry*, took issue with Longfellow: "But his [Longfellow's] conception of the aims of poetry is all wrong; . . . His didactics are all out of place. . . . do not mean to say that a didactic moral may not be well made the under-current of a poetical thesis; but that it can never be well put so obtrusively forth, as in the majority of his compositions." And in *The Poetic Principle*, again Poe spoke his mind on this subject: "We see it [epic mania] succeeded by a heresy too palpably false to be long tolerated, that one which, in the brief period it has already endured, may be said to have accomplished more in the corruption of our Poetical Literature than all its other enemies combined. I allude to the heresy of the Didactic."

"No artist puts forth *views*. *Views* belong to people who are not artists," said the epigrammatic Oscar Wilde. All too frequently, moralizings are set formulas to be repeated *ad nauseam* by the insincere. "If theology desires to move us, she must fefwrite her formulas," maintained Wilde. "Every genuinely religious person," asserts Shaw, "is a heretic and therefore a revolutionist," who would have little use for oft-reiterated moralizing formulas. "A poet," held Shelley, "will do ill to embody his own ideas of right and wrong,

which are usually those of his place and time, in his poetical creations, which participate in neither." "We have more moral, political, and historical wisdom," wrote Shelley in his *A Defence of Poetry*, "than we know how to reduce into practice; . . . . There is no want of knowledge respecting what is wisest and best in morals, government, and political economy, or at least, what is wiser and better than what men now practice and endure. But we let '*I dare not wait upon I would*, like the poor cat in the adage.' We want [lack] the creative faculty to imagine that which we know; we want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine; we want the poetry of life, our calculations have outrun conception; we have eaten more than we can digest." We may hold that a poem is none the worse for having a definite view of life behind it, but not a conventional formula for conduct that protrudes itself at the expense of the larger human values. Once more we say, *the poem really great is the poem that first stirs our emotions profoundly and then gives a meaning and a direction to our feelings by the unity and truth of its underlying idea*. A poem that is a moralizing bore cannot claim absolution as a work of art on the ground that it is a valuable didactic sermon.<sup>82</sup>

On the other hand, let us not be misunderstood. Whether there is or is not, most of us have an instinctive feeling that there is a moral world and that we live and move and have

<sup>82</sup> For the moral element in poetry, see Lowell's essay, "The Origin of Didactic Poetry", Poe's *The Poetic Principle*, Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*, Arnold's essays on Wordsworth, Keats, Burns, and his *The Study of Poetry*, Spingarn's *Creative Criticism*, Browning's *Shelley and the Art of Poetry*, Woodberry's *The Appreciation of Literature*. For the moralizing element in our earlier English poetry, see Williams' *Gnomic Poetry in Anglo-Saxon* and Gerould's *The Saints' Legends*.

our being in that moral world. We accept or reject a moral universe, for it has a very direct bearing on our personality and existence. Job had his very definite conception of a moral universe. Emerson had his. Large minds, like those of Brahma, Buddha, Plato, Job, the Psalmist, the Christ, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Emerson, Whitman, and others, have had large conceptions of the eternal verities, conceptions often far above our own poor power to add or to detract. It is the "high seriousness" of absolute sincerity which Arnold makes the keynote of his *The Study of Poetry*. It is that in a poet which finds us deeper than we have ever been before. And while a thing is not necessarily true because a man dies for it, yet we may rest assured that there is an approach to truth when a man does die for what is to him a guiding precept in his heart. Socrates, the Christ, Savonarola, Joan of Arc died only to live again. They are of the choice souls "who saw life steadily, and saw it whole." John Masfield, in *Dauber*, has Dauber say,

Who cares how bad my painting may be? I  
Mean to go on, and, if I fail, to try.  
However much I miss of my intent,  
If I have done my best I'll be content.  
You cannot understand that. Let it be.  
You cannot understand, nor know, nor share.  
This is a matter touching only me;  
My sketch may be a daub, for aught I care.  
You may be right. But even if you were,  
Your mocking should not stop this work of mine;  
Not though it be, its prompting is divine.

With cheap and temporal moralizing great poetry has nothing to do; with a great moral universe, great poetry has

everything to do! Great poetry is moral always in its exalting effect on the human soul. It is not a category of precepts for individual conduct but a solace for life and noble living. "*Non c'è in mondo chi merita nome di creatore, che Dio ed il Poeta,*" said Tasso.

#### THE EXALTING ELEMENT IN POETRY

"The best books are those that every reader thinks he might have written himself," wrote Pascal.<sup>33</sup> Poetry, as nearly as may be, reveals ourselves to ourselves. A poet is great to a people because that people is great also. Literature is within you, the masters only bring it out. "For the poets may never with safety cut wholly loose from what is common to the poet and the rest of us."<sup>34</sup> Just as a man expresses his essential nature in what he likes, so a whole people expresses itself in what it likes. In reading you unlock your own personality. "All literature, then, records unconsciously something of the man who wrote it and something also of the people who like or dislike it."<sup>35</sup> "The meaning of any beautiful created thing is at least as much in the soul of him who looks at it as it was in the soul who wrought it."<sup>36</sup> "Poetry," asserted Keats, "should strike the reader, as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost as a remembrance. . . . The good reader must share in the genius of his author in however pale a form and on however low a scale. . . . The act of reading is a blending of two souls, nor is it seldom that the reader brings the best part, vivifying

<sup>33</sup> *Thoughts*, I, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Lamborn's *The Rudiments of Criticism*, page 57.

<sup>35</sup> Smith's *What Can Literature Do for Me?*, page 72.

<sup>36</sup> Lamborn's *The Rudiments of Criticism*, page 122.

his author with his own memory and aspiration and imparting a flame to the words from his own soul.”<sup>87</sup> “A thousand springs seemed to gush up at once into my heart,” said Bryant in commenting on his first reading of Wordsworth, “and the face of nature changed of a sudden with a strange freshness and life.” “It was just as though the voice of my own soul spoke to me through Plato,” said John Addington Symonds on his initial introduction to Plato. “Harrow vanished into unreality. I had touched solid ground. Here was poetry, the philosophy of my own enthusiasm expressed with all the magic of universal style.” “There is one immortal work that moves me still more, a work that utters all the world’s yearning anguish and disillusionment in one sorrow-laden and bitter cry, and above stately music thrills like a voice of pines heard in the darkness of a midnight gale; and that is the book of Ecclesiastes,” testified Rider Haggard. “He is a perpetual fountain of good sense,” said Matthew Arnold of Chaucer—but this wholesome good sense was also in the heart of Matthew Arnold. “More and more,” continues Arnold, “mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life to us, to sustain us.”<sup>88</sup>

That a great poet must have a great public is not merely a fact—it is a truth! If the light is not in us, we cannot see. “Yet the climate, the age, the disposition of the people, to whom a poet writes, may be so different that what pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an English audience; but the poet’s business is certainly to please the audience.”<sup>89</sup> Poetry is never written for the dead; nor is it even written specially for pos-

<sup>87</sup> Woodberry’s *The Appreciation of Literature*, page 3.

<sup>88</sup> *The Study of Poetry*.

<sup>89</sup> Dryden’s *Head of an Answer to Rhymes* (ca. 1678).

terity. Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Chaucer, Milton, Burns, Wordsworth, Tennyson, each wrote for his own time; but they wrote deep enough and sincerely enough to touch bottom. If an older poet, or a contemporary one, offers nothing that interests and moves the present generation, we shall have to drop him. And we 'do drop him! Many a poet heralded in his own time is wholly lost to us today: the chances are that, after all, they did not actually touch bottom. Homer is great, not because Matthew Arnold said so, but because he proves himself a great poet to us now. Homer touched the well-springs of the human soul and then communicated his thoughts and feelings to a far generation. "Time," says Shakespeare, "insults o'er dull and speechless tribes." A good reader, an understanding public, is the poet's best friend; for the poet strives in vain unless he be understood: the reader's own experience, in common with that of the writer, is the reciprocal key to literature. Paul Revere has ridden much better since Longfellow's poem of 1860 than he ever did before. James Russell Lowell understood that a great public kept alive a great poet; witness his "An Incident in a Railroad Car":

#### AN INCIDENT IN A RAILROAD CAR

He spoke of Burns: men rude and rough  
Pressed round to hear the praise of one  
Whose heart was made of manly, simple stuff,  
As homespun as their own.

Never did Poesy appear  
So full of heaven to me, as when  
I saw how it would pierce through pride and fear  
To the lives of coarsest men.

It may be glorious to write  
Thoughts that shall glad the two or three  
High souls, like those far stars that come in sight  
Once in a century;

But better far it is to speak  
One simple word, which now and then  
Shall waken their free nature in the weak  
And friendless sons of men;

To write some earnest verse or line,  
Which, seeking not the praise of art,  
Shall make a clearer faith and manhood shine  
In the untutored heart.

He who doth this, in verse or prose,  
May be forgotten in his day  
But surely shall be crowned at last with those  
Who live and speak for aye.

"A great poem," wrote Shelley, "is a fountain forever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight; and after one person and one age has exhausted all its divine effluence which their peculiar relations enable them to share, another and yet another succeeds, and new relations are ever developed, the source of an unforeseen and unconceived delight."<sup>40</sup> Fame is merely the reception and thankful appreciation and understanding of a grateful mankind. A public helps to keep a poem alive; but "Poetry redeems from decay the visitation of the divinity in man."<sup>40</sup> It is to the credit, somewhat, of an author that he has written a great poem: but in no less degree it is to the credit of the individual and especially a whole people that they recognize the greatness of the poem and live accordingly.

<sup>40</sup> Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* (Winstanley's edition), pages 42, 52.



The creative mind, then, the poet, is a genius who cannot get away from the passionate yearning to express the sincere impulse that is in his heart. Like Prometheus, he is bound by fetters that he cannot break; his is the poetic urge, his is the prison-house that holds him in thrall; keenly he feels its encircling grip, yet he would not escape it if he could. He would leap up—again and again—to God as it were. He is conative. "Conative experience is the felt impulse to action; and it is felt, or it is prominent in experience, in proportion to the strength of the working impulse. It takes the form of mere craving for some undefined goal, of definitely directed desire, of conflict of desires, of resolving, choosing, willing; . . . . Now such felt impulse is present in all emotional experience."<sup>41</sup> Witter Bynner, crying out from the housetops as it were, under conative impulse, wrote:

## ECCE HOMO

Behold the man alive in me,  
Behold the man in you!  
If there is God,—am I not he?  
Shall I myself undo?

I have been waiting long enough—"  
Impossible gods, goodbye;  
I wait no more. The way is rough—  
But the god who climbs is I.

This feeling is a consciousness that never was on land or on sea. God, says Edward Lucas White in his poem "Genius," has set the creative poet on a "beacon tower" where he "must remain" till his "passion is burned out":

<sup>41</sup> McDougall's *Outline of Psychology*, page 320.

## GENIUS

He cried aloud to God: "The men below  
Are happy, for I see them come and go,  
Parents and mates and friends, paired, clothed with love;  
They heed not, see not, need me not above,—  
I am alone here. Grant me love and peace,  
Or if not them, grant me at least release."

God answered him. "I set you here on high  
Upon my beacon tower, you know not why  
Your soul-torch by the cruel gale is blown  
As desperate as your aching heart is lone.  
You may not guess but that it shines in vain,  
Yet, till it is burned out, you must remain."

*It is only when the poet's emotions, keyed up to high tension and given direction and significance by the unity and truth of some underlying idea, are made ennobling and exalting in their effect by the conative impulse that we get poetry of the highest kind.*

The creative poet and his product, poetry, at their highest and best, are characterized by a state of passionate and happy absorption. Poetry, at its finest, lifts us into the perfect moment of existence. It is that conscious happiness in which one is absorbed and, as it were, immersed in the very thought and emotion we are experiencing. We are unconscious of everything about us and are functioning in terms of our own thought and feeling only. It is the supreme experience of the human soul, a moment of perfection, of ecstasy,<sup>42</sup> of oneness with God. It is that feeling which never

<sup>42</sup> For the esthetic and exalting element, see Puffer's *The Psychology of Beauty*, chapters ii, iii, Burke's *Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Neilson's *The Essentials of Poetry*, chapter vi, "Intensity in Poetry"; Arnold's *The Study of Poetry*.

was on land nor on sea. It is a sweet hour of self-forgetfulness. It is in such hours that great deeds are done, that men rise to the heights of exalting and far-reaching vision, that men heroically and willingly make the supreme sacrifice. It is because of this that Archimedes, absorbed in impersonal thought, could pay for it by forfeit of his life; that Socrates, musing from dawn to dusk on great ideas, could drink the fatal hemlock; that the Christ, in a moment of supreme love (no anger or anguish), could, on the agony of the rood, say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The work of the great poet is exalting because it provokes in us "that fullness in which an ecstatic state is realized," and leads one to "forget even his individuality, his will, and only continues to exist as a pure subject, the clear mirror of the object," as Schopenhauer holds. Above all, "The temporary evaporation of the consciousness of one's personality is then decidedly not a pathological experience,"<sup>48</sup> but, on the contrary, it is an experience common to normal human beings. Once having been caught and moved by the emotion and idea of an exalting poem we give ourselves over to it wholly and, by it, are carried to the supreme heights, to a kind of ecstasy which for the moment lifts us out of the ordinary world of waking consciousness into a kind of dream-world where we sojourn with the eternities and where time is not. It is that which we experience when we read that great passage in Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale* in which the old man who cannot die speaks. The utter pathos of it all!

This olde man gan looke in his visage,  
And seyde thus: "For I ne kan not fynde  
A man, though that I walked into Inde,

<sup>48</sup> Puffer's *The Psychology of Beauty*, page 61.

Neither in citee, ne in no village,  
That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age;  
And therefor moot I han myn age stille,  
As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille.  
Ne Deeth, allas! ne wol not han my lyf,  
Thus walke I, lyk a resseless karyf,  
And on the ground, which is my moodres gate,  
I knokke with my staf, early and late,  
And seye, 'Leeve Mooder, leet me in.' "

This exalting quality is the final test of the theme of a great poem. Does it lift us to the very heights? While it is with difficulty that we can analyze and define this exalting quality, those who have experienced it in a poem always recognize it instantly, and never forget it. This is the effect one experiences when he reads Shelley's "To a Skylark" through to the last stanza, the very last line, and feels himself lifted by the theme to the heights of emotional ecstasy:

Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know,  
Such harmonious madness  
From my lips would flow,  
That the world should listen then as I am listening now.

Bryant's "Lines to a Waterfowl," likewise, carries us on and upward in spiritual fervor until we all but lose ourselves in our emotional functioning in oneness with the theme of the poem. Again and again Burns's poems have this quality in the closing stanza. We need but mention his "Highland Mary," "Ae Fond Kiss," and "A Red, Red Rose"; and we need but to quote his simple little "John Anderson, My Jo":

John Anderson, my jo, John,  
When we were first acquent,

Your locks were like the raven,  
Your bonnie brow was brent,  
But now your brow is beld, John,  
Your locks are like the snow;  
But blessings on your frosty pow,  
John Anderson, my jo!

John Anderson, my jo, John,  
We clamb the hill thegither;  
And monie a canty day, John,  
We've had wi' anither:  
Now we maun totter down, John,  
But hand in hand we'll go,  
And sleep thegither at the foot,  
John Anderson, my jo.

Throughout this poem there is a constancy and a devotion that touches us to the very quick; but when we come to the last three or four lines, our emotional bounds are loosed and we are carried forward and upward into a "new heaven and a new earth." This is the experience of emotional exaltation. This is the experience every great lyric should have for the reader.

"Only those should sing of death who are stronger than death," said Oscar Wilde. Bryant's "Thanatopsis," Quiller-Couch's "Dominus Illuminatio Mea," Stevenson's "Requiem," and all the great elegies of the world—*Lycidas*, *Adonais*, *In Memoriam*, *Thyrsis*—are far, far stronger than death, because, through their exalting element, they carry us above and beyond the sadness of death. The greatest thing in the world is realization of one's self, and to realize one's self through exalting pleasure is far finer than to realize one's self partly and to continue still to feel the sting of pain.

Burns's poems of love for Highland Mary, though each one was prompted by an initial stimulus of sorrow, are today the possession of the race, because in reading them we are exalted into forgetting the sorrow and into a renewed rapture of devotion. Nor is there anything cheaply sentimental about this: only the insincere are sentimental in matters of human affection. Love is too fundamental an emotion to trifle with. To those who have loved, it is all but sacred—*is* sacred! Not even religious faith—perhaps it is likewise love—can carry a man to more exalted heights than can the love of a wholesome, pure maiden. Thus Robert Louis Stevenson,<sup>44</sup> who loved life as few men have loved it and who endured its pangs as few have endured them, could write and did write:

## IN THE HIGHLANDS

In the highlands, in the country places,  
Where the old plain men have rosy faces,  
And the young fair maidens  
Quiet eyes,  
Where essential silence chills and blesses,  
And for ever in the hill-recesses  
*Her* more lovely music  
Broods and dies—  
O to mount again where erst I haunted,  
Where the old red hills are bird-enchanted,  
And the low green meadows  
Bright with sward;  
And when even dies, the million-tinted,  
And the night has come, and planets glinted,  
Lo, the valley hollow  
Lamp-bestarr'd!

<sup>44</sup> See Stevenson's "My Wife" and "Requiem." See also *An Intimate Portrait of R. L. S.*, by Lloyd Osborne.

O to dream, O to awake and wander  
 There, and with delight to take and render,  
 Through the trance of silence,  
 Quiet breath!  
 Lo! for there, among the flowers and grasses,  
 Only the mightier movement sounds and passes,  
 Only winds and rivers,  
 Life and death.

When we read such a poem we feel that Shelley was right in saying, "Poetry redeems from decay the visitation of divinity in man." In the presence of such exalting poems we can say with that apostle of a new faith, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."<sup>45</sup>

It is the exalting element in great poetry that makes the poet the teacher, inspirer, and leader of the race.<sup>46</sup> "It is impossible," held Shelley, "to feel them [poets] without becoming a portion of that beauty which we contemplate." Logic has played little part in the world of great deeds and great movements. Isaiah of old, by his stirring appeal, led the men of the Old Testament—and Isaiah is poetry! Once

<sup>45</sup> For the exalting element to more than common degree, the reader would profit by perusal of the following poems in the *Oxford Book of English Verse* Nos 8, 56, 67, 238, 250, 326, 444, 463, 476, 511, 528, 529, 530, 532, 546, 564, 567, 593, 608, 610, 615, 634, 654, 695, 727, 729, 741, 742, 743, 746, 752, 755, 763, 771, 780, 781, 793, 798, 799, 842, 845, 847, 848, 856, 862, 883.

<sup>46</sup> See Fairchild's *The Making of Poetry*, chapter vii, "The Need and Value of Poetry"; Spenser's *An Apologie for Poetrie*, Arnold's *The Study of Poetry*, Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*, Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, chapter xv, "The Poetic Madness and Catharsis," and chapter xvi, "The Uses of Poetry", Smith's *What Can Literature Do for Me?*, Woodberry's *The Appreciation of Literature*, Spingarn's *The New Criticism*, and Puffer's *The Psychology of Beauty*, chapters iii, vi, vii.

upon a time, having caught the spiritual vision of a Redeemer, he cried out in his heart,

For unto us a child is born,  
Unto us a son is given;  
And the government shall be upon his shoulder:  
And his name shall be called, Wonderful Counsellor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace.

And Christian multitudes ever since have carried on the refrain and by its thought and emotion have been exalted in their hearts. The Psalms of David have moved the world for more than twenty centuries, and the Great Teacher quoted them frequently. Today they are a song on our lips. Tennyson spoke of Virgil as a

Light among the vanished ages;  
Star that gildeth yet this phantom shore.

And Longfellow, in his sonnet on Dante — all too little known—recognized the potency of that poet:

O star of morning and of liberty!  
O bringer of the light, whose splendor shines  
Above the darkness of the Apennines  
Forerunner of the day that is to be!

Repeat thy song, till the familiar lines  
Are footprints for the thought of Italy.

A poem deserves its name as such only when it exalts, when it gives us dreams and visions beyond the "vault of time." Then it is, as Lowell says in his "Ode on Time," that

The dreams which nations dream come true  
And shape the world anew.



"Truly," wrote Sidney, "I have known men, that even with reading *Amadis de Gaul* (which God knoweth wanteth much of a perfect Poesie), have found their hearts moved to the exercise of courtesie, liberalitie, and especially courage." Reading the great poets is like meeting one's most cherished friend:

My pulses therefore beat again  
For other friends that once I met,  
Nor can it suit me to forget  
The mighty hopes that make us men.<sup>47</sup>

A man or a nation to be greatly good must imagine greatly. In men's struggle to be greatly good, it is not impossible that on the harp of the human soul may be struck notes not unfamiliar to the angels. And when, through the poem of the great poet, that vision comes to the heart of man, life has no terrors, death has no sting. There is a song on his lips and around him there is a peculiar glory. Then it is that for him life is not a cup to be drained but a chalice to be filled.

A traveler pausing at the village well,  
His hollowed palms a cup,  
Bends down to drink, but, caught as by a spell,  
With thirst unslaked, looks up.

And the fair keeper of the fountain stands,  
Her girlish laughter stilled,  
Nor careth from her urn into his hands  
How thin a stream is spilled.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *In Memoriam*, lxxxv.

<sup>48</sup> One of the Indian epigrams in *A Century of Indian Epigrams*, chiefly from the old Sanskrit of Bhartrihari, by Paul Elmer Moore.



## CHAPTER III

### *THE ORGANIC RHYTHM OF A POEM*

RHYTHM THE ORGANIC ASPECT OF ALL  
PRIMITIVE EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION



OSCAR WILDE wrote, "In his very rejection of art, Walt Whitman was an artist." Here is a profound truth with regard to creative poetry. "Since the time of Aristotle," declared the scientist, Hudson Maxim, "so little advancement has been made in the understanding of poetry that it is as though there had been a universal agreement on the part of mankind to strive for knowledge of everything except this single subject, to reason and to be reasonable about everything else, but to leave poetry forever as in the dark ages of thought."<sup>1</sup> Herbert Spencer tells us that, as he grew older, he came to realize more and more how little the great mass of mankind is governed by rationality. Fortunately, the genuine creative impulse cannot easily be traduced: it is the unerring instinct of the true artist that has kept poetry off the misleading shoals

<sup>1</sup> *The Science of Poetry and the Philosophy of Language*, page 47.

built by critics whose instincts have not been those of the poet and whose science has not been that of the physiological and psychological investigator. Usually, if not always, we can trust the creative poet; frequently we cannot accord quite the same faith to the literary theorist. Confusion, much more than should be the case, attaches itself to two aspects of the poet's mind and its product, poetry: (1) the somewhat vague idea as to the organic nature of rhythm,<sup>2</sup> and its frequent identification per se with meter; and (2) the theory that poetic utterance is communal<sup>3</sup> and not individual in origin. Our chief concern, however, is with organic rhythm.

<sup>2</sup> An excellent study in the origin and nature of rhythm is Thaddeus L. Bolton's "Rhythm," *American Journal of Psychology*, VI, 2, further studies include Wundt's "Untersuchungen zur Psychologie und Aesthetik des Rhythms," *Philosophische Studien*, X, 249-322, 393-430, and his *Volkerpsychologie*, chapter 1, Kawczynski's *Essai comparatif sur l'origine et l'histoire des rythmes* (Paris, 1889), William Morrison Patterson's *The Rhythm of Prose* (Columbia University Press), Guest's *A History of English Rhythms*. See also Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, III, VII, and *Poetics*, IV, C. M. Lotzpiech's "Poetry, Prose, and Rhythm," *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, XXXVII, 293-310, M. A. Harris' "A Study of the Nature of Rhythm," *ibid.*, XI, XII, James Routh's "Prose Rhythms," *ibid.*, XXXVIII, 685-697, Louise Pound's "The Beginnings of Poetry," *ibid.*, XXV, 201-232, F. N. Scott's "Scansion of Prose Rhythms," *ibid.*, XX, 707, and his "The Most Fundamental Differentia of Poetry and Prose," *ibid.*, XIX, 250 ff, Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, chapter xiv, on "The Impulse and the Control."

<sup>3</sup> The most consummate presentation of both these tenets is Gummere's *The Beginnings of Poetry*, chapter ii, dealing with "Rhythm [Meter] as the Essential Fact of Poetry," and the remaining chapters defending the "communal" theory of the origin of poetry. Louise Pound's "The Term 'Communal,'" *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, XXXIX, 440-454, and her *Poetic Origins and the Ballad*, especially chapter i, "The Beginnings of Poetry," and chapters ii, iii, iv, go far in presenting evidence to make much less tenable the "communal" theory. Footnotes provide an exhaustive citation of references pro and con. See also a

It must be obvious to any mind that even a creative poet, in his periods of emotional functioning, cannot be at white heat all the time and never burn out. No emotional activity, resulting from organic adaptive activity in the human organism, can continue indefinitely and without ever ending. Strong emotional excitement and tension obtaining for a period must, and does, come to an ultimate conclusion. Subjective organic functioning must express itself in objective motor manifestations: whether the emotion is expressed via our voice in simple meaningless vocables or in well-defined language or via our physical gestures, the result is always the same: there always comes a final halt of a given emotional impulse. This is the experience of all human life. Enthusiastically we apply ourselves to some inviting task to be done; after a period, our enthusiasm subsides and will not continue to obtain until it is given a period in which to rest and recuperate. We go into impulsive raptures for a short half-hour in our enjoyment of exalting music and then become a bit sated and either unconsciously prefer not to have any more for the moment or perhaps wish to return to it at a later time and again indulge our rapture. Joyously we set out in the morning for the day's picnicking, but are ready to get home at eventime long before the day has ended, hoping, no doubt, that maybe next week we shall have another outing.

bibliography in Gayley and Scott's *Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism*, pages 262 ff. More recently H. S. V. Jones in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, XXII (January 1923), and G. H. Gerould in *Modern Philology*, XXI (August 1923), re-affirm the "communal" theory; and Alfred Gotze, in his *Vom Deutschen Volksleid* (1921), attacks it. The publications of the Bureau of American Ethnology, also the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *Journal of American Ethnology and Archaeology*, etc., are replete with discussion and illustrative material.

We are happy at suddenly meeting an old acquaintance of an earlier period of our lives, but after a short hour's talking over old times we grow somewhat sated—and then separate and “hope to meet again some time.” For a moment we go into ecstasies at viewing suddenly a beautiful landscape from a mountain elevation, and then turn to something else and come back to it again only if, after a moment of recuperation of the nerve centers, the stimulus of the landscape continues to be strong enough to provoke once more our attention. It is thus with each of the emotions the human organism is heir to. Like the charged electric battery, after it has been used for a period of activity, it becomes discharged and only when it is given rest and is recharged does it respond again to any outlet provided for its restored energy.

It is thus in the adaptive activity in the nerve centers of the human organism and its accompanying emotional functioning: there is a period of action followed by a short period of inaction; a period of working followed by a short period of resting and recuperating; a period of functioning followed by a short period of repose. None of these recurrent periods of action or functioning are necessarily of identical length—quite the contrary, because emotion is fluent and flexible, not mechanically regular—but there is something of a sameness in average periodicity. Sometimes the functioning period is very tense and, as a consequence, rather short; at other times the activity is less tense and the activity period correspondingly longer.

It is obvious that this phenomenon in the adaptive conduct and emotional functioning of the human organism is but a manifestation of the law of supply and temporary exhaustion in the nerve centers. This recurrence of periods of functioning following shorter periods of rest and recupera-

tion is rhythm. It is *organic rhythm*, resulting from the fact that the nerve centers cannot function indefinitely at full capacity, and that the physical body, then, through which stimuli are expressed, cannot endure forever in its functioning but becomes exhausted and must be given a short respite from labor to recuperate itself before it can function anew. *Rhythmic law is adaptive conduct's organic law: supply and exhaustion. We live and move and have our being in large flowing rhythms.* Intense emotion always accompanies intense adaptive adjustment: adaptive activity in the nerve centers is rhythmical: emotion, then, is rhythmical. Both are automatically regulated by the organic law of exhaustion and supply. The magic secret of fluid rhythm in poetry is intense emotion. Poetic rhythm does not come by chance. Nor is it mechanical. It is organic!

In the second place, our psychologists tell us that when our emotions are deeply aroused or are keenly functioning, we function in terms of *one emotion dominating* and one only. In any adaptive adjustment in the organism, all other adaptive adjustments not only become subordinate but actually converge to support and intensify the one dominant adaptation. Except, then, by sheer exercise of will we do not and cannot change from one extreme emotion to another. "Mirth," says Shakespeare, "cannot move a soul to agony."<sup>4</sup> A given strong emotion functioning in us so completely dominates us that often we are wholly unaware of the presence of any other stimulus or less strong emotional activity. When we are really sad at the loss of one near and dear to us, we can weep only; all things else, even hunger and physical pain, are foreign to us. When we are filled with joy and

<sup>4</sup> *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act V, Scene ii, line 867.

happiness, we function almost entirely in terms of heightened pleasure and are oblivious to the presence of sorrow or physical discomfort. A child becomes so immersed in its play with its doll that it is wholly unaware that we are observing it. Our enjoyment of a novel often continues above the admonitions of mother to come to the dinner that is fast growing cold. In the theater or at the opera we are so lost in our emotional response to what is taking place before us that we are oblivious to the presence even of friends at our side. Man, from the most primitive to the most highly civilized, when highly wrought up, has functioned emotionally in terms of some one single tendency dominating. Not only is emotional activity rhythmical, as pointed out in the preceding paragraphs, but it is also single in its effect. Both these phenomena are organic.

Obviously it must be during one of these rhythmic periods of one dominant emotion functioning strongly that the creative poet produces his poem; certainly, whatever be his subsequent re-working thereof, it is during the predominance of such a sustained single emotion that the underlying theme of his poem is born. It follows, too, that the expression of that sustained singleness of emotional functioning both would be single in its emotional effect and would be one large sustained rhythm. Indeed, the very first essential of a good poem, taken as a unit, is that it shall be one full, sustained, rhythmic "outburst of the impassioned soul." If, in reading the poet's poem, we do not conceive and read it—always (1) *intense* and *sustained* in its emotion and (2) *relatively short* in its duration—as one rhythm, as one vibrant emotional movement, irrespective of line arrangement or number of stanzas, we have not conceived and cannot read the poem as the poet felt, conceived, and composed it. The emotional

tension must be sustained, without any let-down, from first line to last line, in terms of one large, swelling rhythmic curve; for that is the way the creative poet expressed it. If we turn to any one of our fine poems in English, say, for example, Browning's song from "Pippa Passes," Christina Rossetti's "A Birthday," Whitman's "The Imprisoned Soul," Arnold's "Philomela," Keats's sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," Tennyson's "Break, Break, Break," Shakespeare's "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind," and read it with full emotional value, as a single complete unit and not by lines or stanzas, from beginning to end, we shall find that the poem is actually one fine, sustained, and exalting rhythmic curve. Note:

## A BIRTHDAY

My heart is like a singing bird  
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;  
My heart is like an apple-tree  
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;  
My heart is like a rainbow shell  
That paddles in a halcyon sea;  
My heart is gladder than all these,  
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;  
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;  
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,  
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;  
Work it in gold and silver grapes,  
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;  
Because the birthday of my life  
Is come, my love is come to me.

Here we have the one dominant note of exalting happiness



(its theme) expressed in one full, rhythmic swell. Or let us read

PIPPA'S SONG

The year 's at the spring,  
And day 's at the morn;  
Morning 's at seven;  
The hill-side 's dew-pearl'd  
The lark 's on the wing;  
The snail 's on the thorn;  
God 's in his heaven  
All 's right with the world!

Here again is the one dominating emotion of optimistic joy (its theme) expressed in terms of one pulsating and sustained rhythm.

If we read Poe's "Annabel Lee," we find that he has poured out all his emotion for the maiden he loved in one exalting rhythmic entity. Thus Milton's sonnet "On His Blindness" is one exaltingly supported outflowing of the human soul. Tennyson's "Ulysses"—a lyric song and not an epic narrative—likewise, is the full outpouring, in one grand, sustained rhythm, of the emotion of the impatient and unsatisfied Anglo-Saxon heart—"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." Thus it is with Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," a simplified, dominating emotional fervor in terms of one sublimely beautiful rhythm; with Blake's "The Tiger," one sustained emotion of terror in one full lyric movement; and with Ben Jonson's "To Celia," a rare jewel of tenderness and devotion in one full, smooth, and sustained rhythmic impulse of the emotions—two stanzas, but one simplified, organic rhythmic utterance!

## TO CELIA

Drink to me only with thine eyes,  
And I will pledge with mine;  
Or leave a kiss but in the cup  
And I'll not look for wine.  
The thirst that from the soul doth rise  
Doth ask a drink divine;  
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,  
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,  
Not so much honouring thee  
As giving it a hope that there  
It could not wither'd be;  
But thou thereon didst only breathe,  
And sent'st it back to me;  
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,  
Not of itself but thee!

The student of poetry must not take too lightly this fundamental idea that there is a singleness of rhythmic unity to every genuinely creative poetic utterance. All too frequently, the principle is entirely lost sight of by the lover of poetry: indeed, to some, the idea of rhythmic unity in a poem as a whole has never occurred at all. The poets themselves, however, understand it. "I always compose rhythmically," says Sara Teasdale. Real poetic utterance is always (1) deeply emotional, (2) sustained in tension, and (3) relatively brief in duration. Passionate love, hectic fear, combative anger, ecstatic pleasure, grievous sorrow, when at their tensest, are of rather short duration—much shorter than we think, because the human machine can endure to express them only so long and then there is marked decline in functioning,

even, so psychologists tell us, sometimes swooning and collapse. We again quote Poe: "I need scarcely observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this excitement. But all excitements are, through a psychal necessity, transient. The degree of excitement which would enable a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. After the lapse of a half-hour [of course Poe's estimate, in the light of modern psychology, is pretty generous], at the very utmost, it flags—fails—a revulsion ensues—and then the poem is, in effect, no longer such." "In short," said Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria*, "whatever specific import we attach to the word poetry, there will be found involved in it, as a necessary consequence, that a poem of any length neither can be, nor ought to be, all poetry." Poe was psychologically correct when he held that there is "no such thing as a long poem," that in fact a "long poem is a contradiction in terms." It will require but little patient examination of a long lyric to convince us that there is much padding of prose narrative or of abstract ideas. Indeed, it may be held that there is little real creative poetry in purely narrative poems. It may be said, with Poe, that *Paradise Lost* is really a group of short, exalting, lyrical outbursts held together by the larger narrative framework of the story of the Fall of Man. While Shelley said Milton conceived *Paradise Lost* as a unit—of course, Shelley had no direct evidence of this and Milton left us none—we need only to examine the poem to detect the essentially lyrical parts and the essentially bald narrative parts. "Even the inspired poet"—and we believe that if there ever was such a thing as an inspired poet, Milton was that poet—"is not always inspired, but often only copying

the forms of inspiration. Many passages called poetry are only verses connecting the inspired portions."<sup>5</sup> Herrick, in his "Not Every Day Fit for Verse" tells us:

'Tis not every day I  
Fitted am to prophesy,  
No, but when the spirit fills  
The fantastic panicles  
Full of fire, then I write  
As the Godhead doth indite.

Look how next the holy fire  
Either slakes or doth retire,  
So the fancy cools—till when  
That brave spirit comes again.

We may be able mentally, in one grasp, to comprehend the whole of *Paradise Lost*, but we are certain that no one can emotionally experience the whole of that long poem in one single, prolonged, and sustained rhythmic impulse. Most of us, however, can do so by smaller parts. That creative poetic functioning manifests and expresses itself in sustained emotional impulse in terms of organic rhythmic unity needs little further saying.

It follows, then, that in long poems—in even fairly long lyric poems—we should expect to find a long-sustained emotional rhythm somewhat broken up and supported by a sequence of shorter rhythms. Thus:



Now this is exactly the case. Sometimes the divisions appear

<sup>5</sup> Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, page 6.

on the printed page as "parts" or "sections" or "divisions"; more often, however, no such indication appears. If we read Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" (Parts I, II, III), we shall find it to be one full rhythmic entity comprising three minor rhythms, each one of which is likewise a unit but is also emotionally, rhythmically, and thus organically linked to the main dominating emotional impulse of the poem as a whole. Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Parts I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII), on examination—though it has considerable narrative padding—shows itself to be a full rhythmic unity comprising seven minor rhythms organically integral with the main dominant emotional flow of the entire poem. Likewise Tennyson's "The Lotus Eaters," Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Dryden's "Alexander's Feast," Poe's "The Bells," Vachel Lindsay's "The Congo," Shakespeare's *Othello*, and scores of others we might easily list have emotional rhythmical entities organically comprising several supporting minor rhythms of similar emotional quality. It is clear, then, that the larger rhythm of a poem considered as a whole may have, and often does have, minor rhythms of the same emotional value supporting it, just as a vibrating violin string, of a given tone and pitch, is composed of minor subdivisions vibrating in harmony with the main string. Rhythm and harmony are the identifying qualities of creative art of any kind, whether poetry, music, sculpture, dancing, painting, or architecture.

It follows also that a given poem may find its major rhythmic entity made up of and organically supported by the individual rhythm not only of its several parts but even by the very stanzas of which the poem is composed. In most

poems this is exactly the case. If we will read Henry Cust's very exalting and very tender "*Non Nobis*," we shall see at once that the poem is one full and sustained emotional unit—expressed in one full rhythm. That is the way the poem—any poem—should first be read. If, however, we analyze it, we shall detect at once that each stanza is also an emotional rhythmical unit organically a part of the larger unit rhythm of the poem as a whole.

## NON NOBIS

*[Not unto us, O Lord,*  
Not unto us the rapture of the day,  
The peace of night, or love's divine surprise,  
High heart, high speech, high deeds 'mid honoring eyes;  
For at Thy word  
All these are taken away.

*[Not unto us, O Lord:*  
To us thou givest the scorn, the scourge, the scar,  
The ache of life, the loneliness of death,  
The insufferable sufficiency of breath;  
And with Thy sword  
Thou piercest very far.

*Not unto us, O Lord:*  
Nay, Lord, but unto her be all things given—  
My light and life and earth and sky be blasted—  
But let not all that wealth of love be wasted:  
Let Hell afford  
The pavement of her Heaven!

It will be noted that the periodicity of the rhythms of each stanza in "*Non Nobis*" is rather distinct and well defined. Most poems are pretty much of this kind in their stanzaic

organic rhythmical relations to the rhythm of the whole poem. Tennyson, however, is an adept in keeping the emotional tone and tension sustained in his lyrics, very often running through the several stanzas of a poem in terms not only of run-on lines but actually of run-on stanzas. See his *In Memoriam*, v, vii, xiv, xxviii, l, liv, lvii, lxxxvi. Note how lxxxvi is thus sustained with but little subdivision of rhythmic effect that might occur because of the four stanzas in the poem.

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,  
That rollest from the gorgeous gloom  
Of evening over brake and bloom  
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below  
Thro' all the dewy tassell'd wood,  
And shadowing down the horned flood  
In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh  
The full new life that feeds thy breath  
Throughout thy frame, till Doubt and Death,  
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas  
On leagues of odor streaming far,  
To where in yonder orient star  
A hundred spirits whisper "Peace."

It may be said that he is a poet indeed who can sustain his emotional flight in such wise. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" does this in much the same fashion as Tennyson's

poem. And Browning's "Earl Mertoun's Song" is not far behind.

It follows further that, in addition to finding organic rhythmic unity (1) in a poem taken as a whole, in addition to observing organic rhythmic entity (2) in the parts or divisions of a long poem, and in addition to detecting organic rhythm even (3) in the several stanzas of which a given poem is composed, there is, likewise, organic rhythm (4) in a given group of lines and especially (5) in the individual line of a poem—and (6) in the speech group, as we shall see in the chapter on meter. The organic rhythm of a line is so important and so fundamental an element in primitive creative poetic functioning that it must be accorded special consideration. The outward-bound passenger on the trans-oceanic liner, as from the ship's side he peers down upon the water, sees little else than scores of dancing waves (meter)—to him, of course, they seem large and portentous—but the seaman who is on lookout in the crow's nest sees from his elevated position of advantage high up the mast, continuously from horizon to horizon, the huge expansive swells (major rhythms), each comprising several smaller swells (minor rhythms), of the great deep. In our approach to poetry, few of us ever see and feel the major rhythms; some of us detect the minor rhythms of parts, stanzas, groups of lines, and individual lines; but most of us turn our eyes directly to meter—important and organic, as we shall see—and wear its blinding goggles ever after.

Our concern, for the nonce, is rhythm as it appears in the individual line and group of lines. Nothing is more palpably obvious to the investigating scientist than the fact that our common organic processes are both simple and "compound" at one and the same time; that is, while one major



rhythmic process is taking place, within that very major rhythmic movement, there are several smaller rhythmic movements also taking place. Sir Michael Foster<sup>6</sup> tells us that, in experiments conducted on a frog's foot and a rabbit's ear, it was found that the arteries underwent a continuous rhythmical contraction and expansion of the walls, now decreasing and increasing the blood pressure and blood supply—and this all the while that the heartbeat, the pulse, was regularly going on. The arteries are, of course, controlled by the regular vasomotor system, and these rhythmical contractions and expansions indicate a corresponding rhythm in the nerve centers. "This rhythmic rise [blood pressure] must be due," says Foster, "to rhythmic contraction of the arteries, and this is caused by a rhythmic discharge from the vasomotor centers." Dr. Warren P. Lombard,<sup>7</sup> experimenting by lifting a weight with his second finger, reports that after contracting the muscles several times, lifting each time the weight, gradually he lost the power of further contraction, but continued to make the effort to lift the weight at the regular intervals of two seconds. In a short time he regained his former power to lift the weight, which power he maintained for several minutes, and then gradually lost it again. Over a period of twelve minutes of continued functioning, he found that there were five periods of alternating loss and recovery of power; that is, over a period of a sustained major rhythmical functioning there were some five minor rhythms based on the law of activity and repose or supply and exhaustion. Dr. Leo Burgerstein,<sup>8</sup> testing some school children in their ability to

<sup>6</sup> *Physiology* (sixth edition), pages 307, 622.

<sup>7</sup> "Effect of Fatigue upon Muscular Contraction," *American Journal of Psychology*, III, 24-42.

<sup>8</sup> "Die Arbeitskurve einer Stunde," *Zeitschrift für Schulges.*, IV, 9, 10.

multiply and add figures during four successive periods of ten minutes, with five-minute intervals between the periods, found that the third period showed a marked falling-off in the amount of work done, and an increase again during the fifth period. His explanation was that during the first two periods the children gradually became fatigued, and that they recovered during the third period, because the normal amount of work was again done in the fourth; that is, during a given period of a major sustained rhythmic functioning, the children functioned in minor rhythms also in ratio as they were supplied or exhausted with energy. Another experiment reported by Dr. Foster<sup>9</sup> is that of normal respiration. He found that the respiratory movements decreased in depth until they disappeared almost entirely. After a short interval of a few seconds a slight movement occurs, then gradually deeper breathing increases in strength until respiration is normal and sometimes abnormally strong. Here again all the while that there were these major rhythmic cycles of deep breathing and shallow breathing, the regular minor respiratory "pulses" of the several breaths were taking place. Here is both a simplified and a "compound" process taking place during the same interval of time; that is, while the major rhythm was operating because of supply and exhaustion in the nerve center that controlled it, there was also operating the minor respiration "pulse," which also must have been operating rhythmically because of the law of supply and exhaustion in the nerve center controlling it. Why so? we ask. There are theories.<sup>10</sup> It may be due to

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, page 605 Also see the Cheyne-Stokes respiration curve.

<sup>10</sup> See Wundt's "Untersuchungen zur Psychologie und Aesthetik des Rhythms"; Bolton's "Rhythm," *American Journal of Psychology*, VI, 135-154.

waxing and waning in the nutrition delivered to the respiratory nerve centers, or it may be because of an increase and decrease in the inhibitory impulses playing on the nerve centers. In any event the centers function in terms of major and minor rhythms at one and the same time, just as a violin string vibrates as a whole and in harmonious parts at one and the same time. Organic rhythm is a succession of involution of unities, that is, of unities within unities all working in harmony with each other.

Strong emotion, as we have seen, is expressed in sustained rhythmic impulses. Such expression, however, is via the gestures of the human body and via the human voice. The human voice is controlled primarily by the flow of air from the lungs. The bellows-like operation of the lungs is controlled by the intercostal muscles, which are directly controlled by nerve centers that operate organically under the law of action and repose, work and rest, supply and exhaustion. We can expel, for purposes of making sound, the air from the lungs to a given degree of emptiness only; then there must be a moment or two of rest and recuperation, and then we can expel the air again. A sustained emotional flow, a sustained poetic utterance, would have to be expressed primarily in terms of repeated repetitions of that emotion itself, in terms of the rhythmical manifestations of the human voice as it recurred in repeated repetitions made possible by the flow of air from the lungs through the vocal cords. Emotion, from primitive man to the present day, has actually been expressed in just such repetitious manner. Poetry, likewise, and for the identical reason, has been expressed in just such repetitious fashion. The process is organic: the result could not well be otherwise. Poetry, then, has always been the result of two forces: (1) the larger emotional impulse

seeking outlet, and (2) the control of that outlet by the very nature and limitations of the human nerve and musculate tissues. Obviously a good deal of the outward appearance of poetry is the result of this control;<sup>11</sup> that is, *poetic form and technique are largely inherently organic*.

Of the earliest expression of sustained primitive emotion, of course, we have no record whatever. Ages before man developed any kind of artificial language, as we know it, to express his emotions and thoughts, he must have expressed his feelings of pleasure and displeasure in terms of the only means at his command—(1) physical gestures and (2) voice. He must have expressed them in terms of grunts, ejaculations, and a sequence of sounds of more or less similar kind and tone, depending somewhat upon the nature of the emotion that he was experiencing at the moment of utterance. If strongly aroused and if his emotion was sustained, he must have repeated, in somewhat parallel repetitious form, the same sequence of sounds again and again, because of the law of supply and exhaustion controlling the operation of his lungs and voice, until the sustained emotional flow was spent. Herbert Spencer says: “. . . among tribes in the earliest stages . . . a few words uttered in tones expressive of joy or grief recur over and over again; showing a natural tendency which even among ourselves may often be witnessed under sudden disaster. ‘Oh, dear me,’ ‘Oh, dear me,’ ‘Oh, dear me,’ being uttered time after time in the same tones.” E. B. Taylor’s *Anthropology*<sup>12</sup> cites “Nyah eh wa! Nyah eh

<sup>11</sup> See Prescott’s *The Poetic Mind*, especially chapter xiv, “The Impulse and the Control,” in which the author attributes the control to society rather than to organic limitations of the physiological and psychological functioning.

<sup>12</sup> Chapter xii, page 228.

wa!" seemingly meaningless vocables among the North American Indians, and "Ha-ah, ha-ah, ha-ah, ha" among the New Zealanders. Obviously such a sequence of sounds is essentially a repetition refrain—one of the basic elements in lyric poetry, as we shall see in the next chapter. And we need but to turn to any of our present football cheers or college yells to find scores of similar sequences of meaningless vocables that serve most effectively and adequately to express our sustained emotions. The experience of primitive man in expressing his heightened feelings in repetitious and parallel sequence of vocables is common with ours today. Most of our own expressions of sheer joy or of deep grief, at this very moment, are little more than ejaculated "Oh's!" repeated again and again until the feeling subsides.

When finally traditional utterances did appear, ages must have passed before we had any semi-permanent oral or permanent written records thereof that obtained. Seek where we will, however, we find, in any language or among any people, that when we do discover a permanent oral or a written record of primitive poetic expression, invariably it is characterized by (1) *strong sustained emotion*, (2) *repetitious utterance*, giving rise to (3) *repetitious parallelism of phrasing*. That is, since primitive man responded strongly to his environmental stimuli, his expression of his response is always accompanied by (1) tense emotion; since, in his emotional experience, he functioned in terms of one dominating tendency (joy, grief, anger, longing, etc.), his utterance is (2) highly repetitious of the one dominant feeling; since he thus placed like emotion alongside like emotion, his utterance thereof is (3) strikingly parallel and identical in phrasing; since he could not express any given emotion for any longer period than his physical make-up (his lungs, voice,

Among the Piute Indians of our Southwest, there has been found an old, old traditional song, a strictly primitive poem, to the beautiful cottonwood trees which grew in small numbers along the few streams. When springtime came, these cottonwoods were the most conspicuous detail in the otherwise arid landscape. Stirred to the depths, as he gazed upon these beautiful trees, the Piute expressed his sustained emotional fervor in a full simple rhythmic impulse:

In expressing, via the human voice, his emotion of joy (theme) at seeing the cottonwoods, the lungs are emptied

<sup>18</sup> See Louise Pound's *Poetic Origins and the Ballad*, chapters ii, iv, Fairchild's *The Making of Poetry*, chapter vii; Mrs. Gomme's *Dictionary of British Folk-Lore*, C. Alphonso Smith's *Repetition and Parallelism in English Verse*, 1894, J. W. Rankin's "Rhythm and Rime before the Norman Conquest," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*,

in the rhythmic expulsion of air to utter the first line; a moment to rest and refill, and the second line is spoken; then a second rest and refilling, and the third line is forthcoming. Then for the moment having partly but not completely exhausted the largen sustained rhythmic emotional impulse, there is a slight pause to recuperate, and the poet continues.

again, They are growing tall and verdant.  
They are growing tall and verdant.  
 and again, They are growing tall and verdant.

Thus the original sustained emotional impulse has been expressed in terms of (1) one large sustained rhythm comprising (2) two minor rhythms (like two stanzas, as it were) in terms of (3) single line rhythms.

The cottonwoods are growing tall.  
 The cottonwoods are growing tall.  
 The cottonwoods are growing tall.  
 They are growing tall and verdant.  
 They are growing tall and verdant.  
 They are growing tall and verdant.

XXXVI, 401-428, "Parallelism in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *ibid.*, III, 32, Tatlock's "Epic Formula, Especially in Layamon," *ibid.*, XXXVII, 494-529; Gummere's *The Beginnings of Poetry*, Burton's *American Primitive Music*, Cronyn's *The Path to the Rainbow*, Blair's *Indian Tribes of the Mississippi and Great Lakes Region*, and the many publications of the several folk-lore and ethnological societies.

In the original Piute version there is no meter as we understand it, nor to him was there seemingly any thought of metrical utterance: there is only the simple rhythmic flow of the line. And even as we read it in translation, we should not attempt in any way to have any metrical effect. To do so is not to read it as the Indian expressed it. He expressed his larger emotional flow in terms of simple, rhythmic, parallel repetitions.

Another highly primitive poem, the traditional record of which we have, is the beautiful "Mountain Chant" of the Navajo Indians of the Southwest. It is a yearning (theme), prayerful appeal to the Great Spirit on the mountain top for health.

## MOUNTAIN CHANT

I have made your sacrifice.

I have prepared a smoke for you.

My feet restore thou for me;

My legs restore thou for me;

My body restore thou for me;

My mind restore thou for me;

My voice restore thou for me;

Restore all to me in beauty.

Make beautiful all that is before me;

Make beautiful all that is behind me,

Make beautiful my words.

It is done in beauty.



Here again the original sustained emotional impulse to utter appears in a sequence of short rhythmic line lengths, in repetitious parallelism. This primitive poem, like the one to the cottonwoods, is unified, is simple in its effect, because there is one dominating emotion (prayerful appeal) that was the genesis of it. In the original, again, there is no meter; only simple rhythmical repetition. "Poetry," says Gummere, who is supporting his view by reference to Professor Biederman's review of Bücher's *Arbeit und Rhythmus*,<sup>14</sup> "began as mere repetition, without music or rhythm [meter], a parlous and naked state indeed; . . ."<sup>15</sup> Though the larger rhythm of the poem as a whole is expressed in three minor supporting rhythms—(1) the sacrificial smoke, (2) the plea for restored health, and (3) the "make all beautiful," which somewhat corresponds to our "Amen"—the primitive feature is the parallel repetition.

Among the Ojibways there is a traditional poem, a love song, that even in translation is all but meaningless until explained.

Checkabay tabik ondandeyan.

Checkabay tabik ondandeyan.

Ahghamah-sibi ondandeyan.

There is no meter; only simple repetitious rhythms. The Indians, giving it a meaning it once had, say that a lover was out all night on the river alone because he could not sleep. And they say "he could not sleep because his sweetheart was away and he was lonely." Obviously the emotion of loneli-

<sup>14</sup> See *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte*, N.F. II (1897), 369 ff.

<sup>15</sup> *The Beginnings of Poetry*, page 76.

ness is the theme of the poem. The translation as the Ojibways give it is

Checkabay      tabik      ondandeyan.  
[ Throughout    night    I keep awake. ]

Checkabay      tabik      ondandeyan  
[ Throughout    night    I keep awake. ]

Ahgahmah-sibi      ondandeyan.  
[ Upon a river      I keep awake. ]

Another of their love songs, again a song of loneliness and yearning (theme), is a very similar one in meaning.

A-nenah ne-nah-wen-dem.  
A-nenah ne-nah-wen-dem.  
A-nenah nenah-wen-dem.  
Ne-ne moshayn ai-ah-sig.  
O ne-ah-ne-nah-wen-dem.  
Gam-ah-me koy-e-ah-nin.  
Ne-ne moshayn ai-ah-sig.<sup>16</sup>

The free translation is "O, I am very lonesome, My sweetheart is absent." The refrain, "O, I am very lonesome," was repeated until the emotional flow subsided. The more zealously lonesome the speaker, the longer the parallel repetitions continued. While this primitive repetition may seem a bit monotonous to any unsympathetic ear or to the lay reader of poetry, these poems are not monotonous to anyone who will read them in pensive and lonesome mood. On the contrary, they are then unusually fluent, rhythmical, and satis-

<sup>16</sup> Both Ojibway poems are from F. H. Burton's *American Primitive Music*, pages 149, 203, 207.

ying. Primitive man was never conscious of any monotonous repetition or parallelism. He felt only the exaltation of his deep emotions. His emotional functioning was organically simplified: he expressed emotion in terms of repetitious parallelism. To him, rime, meter, stanza forms were unknown; really these are somewhat later, and even relatively recent, developments in the technique of poetry.

Examples of organic rhythm in terms of repetitious parallelism, in primitive poetry and folk-lore, are found in every race and in every clime. They are not limited merely to our American aborigines. The people of the far North pay tribute to their dead with the following:

For our children are gone.

*Ai-ya-ya-ya.*

Come back, nephew, come back, we miss you.

*Ai-ya-ya-ya.*

Come back to us, our lost ones.

We have presents for you.

*Ai-ya-ya-ya.*

Oh, my brother, come back to me.

*Ai-ya-ya-ya.*

Come back, my brother, I am lonely.

*Ai-ya-ya-ya.*

My brother, come back and we'll give you a small present.<sup>17</sup>

The singer then may entreat his children to come back, or his mother, or his sweetheart, or someone else, and he makes promises of good food, or warm skins, or comfortable beds. Always there is one dominant emotion present, the eternal yearning (theme) for the dead one to "Come back to us" expressed to the full in the, to us, meaningless vocable

<sup>17</sup> George W. Cronyn's *The Path of the Rainbow*, page 184.

refrain, "*Ai-ya-ya-yai.*" There is no modern complexity of thought here; only deep, sincere, heartfelt grief. Might it not be, too, that if we were privileged to see the very earliest form of this poem, all "narrative" material would be absent and the song of grief would be the refrain, the sequence of meaningless vocables, only? From the Sandwich Islands, we have another poem of grief (theme), the song of the women expressing their sorrow at the death of their chief.

Alas, alas, dead is my chief.  
Dead is my lord and friend.

My friend in season of famine,  
My friend in time of drought.  
My friend in poverty.  
My friend in the rain and the wind.

And from the Tongans, we have still another poem<sup>18</sup> of sincerest grief (theme) for the wives of a dead chief:

Alas! woe is me!  
Alas! he is dead!  
Alas! now I respect him!  
Alas! how I lament his loss!  
Alas! here are his ruins!

From Jamaica is reported a maiden's love-song eagerly (theme) urging her boy lover to keep quiet until her father passes by.

<sup>18</sup> Both from Fairchild's *The Making of Poetry*, page 220. Fairchild quotes from Grosse's *The Beginning of Art*. See also primitive poems on pages 215-218 of Fairchild.

Be still, my pretty young man.  
 Be still, my pretty young man.  
 Be still, my pretty young man.  
 As my fader driving his sheep,  
 All dem making a deal of noise.

Who is dere goes away.  
 Who is dere goes away.  
 Who is dere goes away.  
 As my fader driving his sheep,  
 All dem making a deal of noise.<sup>19</sup>

Old English dance songs are examples a-many of this fundamental repetitious parallelism. One, a sixteenth-century example, is given in Chapell's *Old English Popular Music*:

Jon come kisse me now, now,  
 Jon come kisse me now, now,  
 Jon, come kisse me by and by,  
 and make no more adow.

From Mrs. Gomme's *Dictionary of British Folk-Lore*<sup>20</sup> we may obtain scores of such examples (in our childhood, again and again we have sung them and danced to them):

Here we go round the mulberry bush,  
 The mulberry bush, the mulberry bush,  
 Here we go round the mulberry bush  
 On a cold and frosty morning.<sup>20</sup>

Too familiar to need quoting are "Skip to my Lou," "Chase the Squirrel," "Jim Along Jo," "Little Brown Jug," "Jolly

<sup>19</sup> Martha W. Beckworth's "The English Ballad in Jamaica," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXIX, 455-483.

<sup>20</sup> *Dictionary of British Folk-Lore*, I, 404. See II, 122, for "Round and Round the Village"; I, 160, for "Green Grass", II, 108, for "A Ring of Roses", I, 171, for the well-known "Green Grayel."

Is the Miller," not to mention the equally repetitious parallel negro spirituals. Repetition to the point of weariness, for the auditor but not for the singer, is characteristic of revival songs. "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Roll, Jordan, Roll," "Promise Land," and "Weeping Mary" are well-known illustrations.

## WEEPING MARY

*If there's anybody here like Weeping Mary*  
Call upon Jesus and he'll draw nigh,  
He'll draw nigh.  
O Glory, glory, glory, hallelujah.  
Glory be to God who rules on high.

*If there's anybody here like Praying Samuel*  
Call upon Jesus, etc.

*If there's anybody here like Doubting Thomas*  
Call upon Jesus, etc.<sup>21</sup>

Such repetitious parallelism in primitive poetry is not a mannerism, it is not something superficial and affected; on the contrary, it is organic and we cannot escape it even if we would. The organic form of our poetry is what it is simply because it could not be other than it is.

.But it is not only in the so-called folk-poetry and ballads

<sup>21</sup> For material on negro spirituals and folk-songs see Miles's "Some Real American Music," *Harper's Magazine*, CIX, 121-122, T. P. Fenner's *Religious Folk Songs of the Negro*, Brown and Butterworth's *The Story of Hymns and Tunes*, "Old Revival Hymns"; Marshall's *A Collection of Revival Hymns and Plantation Melodies*, Natalie Curtis Burlin's *Negro Folk-Songs*. See also *Journal of American Folk-lore*, reports of the ethnological societies, and the several volumes of folk-songs, etc., such as John Lomax's *Cowboy Songs*. An excellent résumé of the subject is found in Louise Pound's *Poetic Origins and the Ballad*, chapters ii, iv.

that we find this organic repetitious parallelism. More than two thousand years before Christ, the ancient Babylonians expressed, in simple repetitious rhythms, their heartfelt longing (theme) to ingratiate themselves with the Goddess Anunit in the following poetical petition:

PENITENTIAL PSALM TO THE GODDESS ANUNIT

May the wrath of the heart of my god be pacified!  
 May the god who is unknown to me be pacified,  
 May the goddess who is unknown to me be pacified,  
 May the known and unknown god be pacified!  
 May the known and unknown goddess be pacified!  
 May the heart of my god be pacified!  
 May the heart of my goddess be pacified!  
 May the god or goddess known or unknown be pacified!  
 May the god who is angry with me be pacified!  
 May the goddess who is angry with me be pacified!  
 The sin which I have committed I know not.  
 The misdeed which I have committed I know not.

A gracious name may my god announce!  
 A gracious name may my goddess announce!  
 A gracious name may my known and unknown god announce!  
 A gracious name may my known and unknown goddess announce!<sup>22</sup>

And from the very ancient sacred books of Persia, we get the poem:

Whilst drinking wine, I never see  
 The frowning face of my enemy;  
 Drink freely of the grape, and naught

<sup>22</sup> *Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, Volume I, "Babylon." This twelve-volume set of ancient literature has literally hundreds of examples of parallelism from every Eastern literature.

Can give the soul one mournful thought;  
Wine is a bride of witching power;  
And wisdom is her marriage dower;  
Wine can the purest joy impart;  
Wine inspires the saddest heart;  
Wine gives cowards valor's rage,  
Wine gives youth to tottering age,  
Wine gives vigor to the weak,  
And dries up sorrow, as the sun  
Absorbs the dew it shines upon.<sup>23</sup>

The enthusiasm for wine drinking as an antidote to the sorrowful mood is repeated again and again, the dominating emotion in the heart of the poet as he wrote this wine song.

A bit more complex in organization but more simplified in its rhythm is a poem from the ancient sacred books of Egypt. This remarkable chant is slightly misanthropic, in that it holds that life, far from being an opportunity for pleasure and unbridled indulgence, is more intolerable than death. The argument is contained in four poems which the unhappy man addresses to his soul. The first poem, here reprinted, portrays the unjust abhorrence in which our unfortunate's name is held by the world. Each three-line strophe begins with the simple, repetitious, rhythmical refrain, "Lo, my name is abhorred," and then, to enforce this statement, adduces for comparison some detestable thing from the daily life of the people, especially the notorious stench of fish and fowl so common in the life of the Nile-dweller. Rhythm, repetition, and concreteness are seldom found more effectively employed.

<sup>23</sup> *Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, Volume VII, "Ancient Persia," page 276.



## THE MISANTHROPE

*The Unjust Abhorrence of His Name*

Lo, my name is abhorred,  
Lo, more than the odor of birds  
On summer days when the sky is hot.

Lo, my name is abhorred,  
Lo, more than a fish-receiver  
On the day of the catch when the sky is hot.

Lo, my name is abhorred,  
Lo, more than the odor of fowl  
On the willow-hill full of geese.

Lo, my name is abhorred,  
Lo, more than the odor of fishermen  
By the shores of the marshes when they have finished.

Lo, my name is abhorred,  
Lo, more than the odor of crocodiles,  
More than sitting under the bank full of crocodiles.

Lo, my name is abhorred,  
Lo, more than a woman,  
Against whom a lie is told her husband.<sup>24</sup>

The two strophes which follow are a bit too long to print here and are also a bit too obscure to be well rendered. It is clear, however, that this strophe is but a reiteration of the fact that the unhappy man's name has become a stench in the nostrils of his fellows; in the second strophe he turns from

<sup>24</sup> *Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, Volume II, "Egypt," page 92. See also *ibid.*, the very beautiful "The Incense Chant."

himself to castigate those who are responsible for his undeserved misery.

The most poetic minds the world has seen were those of the ancient Hebrews. Fundamentally, they were deeply emotional. In his poems and his songs of praise to Jehovah, the ancient Hebrew accorded to God all strength and "the power that endureth forever." Of the many psalms in which this note appears, the Twenty-ninth Psalm, "Song of the Thunderstorm," especially emphasizes this dominant theme. This exalting repetition in parallel phrases, we may rest assured, was not monotonous to the old Hebrew who had the love of God so strongly in his heart. Nor is it monotonous today to him who reads it aright.

#### SONG OF THE THUNDERSTORM

Give unto the Lord, O ye sons of the mighty,  
Give unto the Lord glory and strength.  
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.  
Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters  
The God of glory thundereth.  
Even the Lord upon many waters.

The voice of the Lord is powerful;  
The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.  
The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars,

Yea, the Lord breaketh in pieces the cedars of  
Lebanon.

He maketh them also to skip like a calf;  
Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild-ox.

The voice of the Lord cleaveth the flames of fire.  
The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness;  
The Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve,  
And strippeth the forests bare  
And in his temple every thing saith, Glory.

The Lord sat as king at the flood;  
Yea, the Lord sitteth as king for ever,  
The Lord will give strength unto his people,  
The Lord will bless his people with peace.<sup>25</sup>

As in Babylonian, Persian, and Egyptian, parallelism is characteristic of Hebraic poetic expression.<sup>26</sup> Hebrew poetry was intimate, egoistic: "it never passed beyond the point of expressing the writer's own emotions to the point where he could imagine himself into the feelings of other persons,

<sup>25</sup> See Richard G. Moulton's *The Modern Reader's Bible*, page 768. For other examples of rhythmical repetitious parallelism see the same volume, "The Blessing of Jacob", also Genesis 49 1-27, "Song of Moses and Miriam," Exodus 15 1-19, "Song of Cursing," Deuteronomy 27:13-26, "Deborah's Song," Judges 5 2-5, "Hannah's Thanksgiving," I Samuel 2 1-10, "David's Lament," II Samuel 1 19-27, "The Fall of Babylon," Isaiah 13 19-22; "Doom of Tyre," Isaiah 23 1-14, "Chorus of the Nations," Isaiah 53 1-12, Psalms 1, 7, 15, 19, 23, 24, 42, 51, 67, 70, 85, 91, 136, 146, Proverbs 3 11-19, 6 12-18, 4 10-18, 23 29-35, Ecclesiastes 12 1-7, "The Book of Job," especially "The Curse," Job 3 1-25. In the Apocryphal Book of Enoch there is the beautiful song, "Parable of Enoch on the Future Lot," in the ancient *Sacred Songs and Early Literature of the East*, Volume XII.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. John H. Gardiner's *The Bible as English Literature*, chapter 11; Richard G. Moulton's *The Literary Study of the Bible*, S. R. Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, and the appendix to Richard G. Moulton's *The Modern Reader's Bible*.

whether real or invented." This emotion, dominating, he expressed it again and again, like alongside like, in his repetitious poetic utterance.

If we would see how exaltingly beautiful these old Hebrew psalms are, we need but to compare the First Psalm, "The Tree and the Chaff," in its quite literally translated repetitious, rhythmical version with the metrical version of it in the *Bay Psalm Book*. It is not mere sentiment that prompts us to say that the familiar version is poetry of a high order, whereas the metrical version is wooden to the last degree and divested of all real poetry whatsoever.

## THE TREE AND THE CHAFF

*Psalm I*

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel  
of the wicked,

Nor standeth in the way of sinners,

Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful

But his delight is in the law of the Lord,

And in his law doth he meditate day and night

And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams  
of water,

That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,

Whose leaf also doth not wither,

And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The wicked are not so,

But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment,

Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous:

But the way of the wicked shall perish.

*Psalm I*

Blessed man, that in th' advice  
Of wicked doeth not walk;  
nor stand in sinners way, nor sit  
In chayre of scornfull folk,  
But in the law of Jehovah,  
is his longing delight;  
and in his law doth meditate,  
by day and eke by night.  
And he shall be like to a tree  
planted by water-rivers:  
that in his season yields his fruit,  
and his leafe never withers.  
And all he doth, shall prosper well,  
the wicked are not so:  
but they are like unto the chaffe,  
which winde drives to and fro.  
Therefore shall not ungodly men,  
rise to stand in the doome.  
nor shall the sinners with the just,  
in their assemblie come.  
For of the righteous men, the Lord  
acknowledgeth the way.  
but the way of ungodly men,  
shall utterly decay.<sup>27</sup>

..

In all Hebrew poetry, nothing is more ennoblingly beautiful and more genuinely rhythmical than Ruth's en-

<sup>27</sup> Compare also the Nineteenth Psalm, "The heavens declare the Glory of God, etc.," with the *Bay Psalm Book* version of it and with Joseph Addison's treatment of it; the Twenty-third Psalm with Montgomery's version and also with that of Baker; and the Seventy-second Psalm and the Ninetieth Psalm with Isaac Watts's "O God, our help is ages past."

treaty to Naomi at the close of the Book of Ruth. We can scarcely imagine what injury and havoc a metrical version or any sort of paraphrase of our familiar version would mete out to so pure and so exalting a poem.

Entreat me not to leave thee,  
And to return from following after thee:  
For whither thou goest, I will go;  
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge;  
Thy people shall be my people,  
And thy God my God;  
Where thou diest, I will die,  
And there will I be buried:  
The Lord do so to me  
And more also,  
If aught but death part thee and me.

On turning to earliest classical literature, the case is not much different. While there is much narrative in classical epic and drama, the really more poetic parts are characterized by rhythmic repetition. We are told that many of the simple repetitious passages in Aeschylus' lyrical dramas, for example, are really not always the author's own but very early Greek primitive religious songs. In his *Agamemnon*, the prophetess, Cassandra, designing Clytemnestra's plan treacherously to murder her own husband, Agamemnon, cries out:

Ha! Ha! what plots she now!  
A new sorrow, a new snare,  
To the house of the Atridae,  
And a burden none may bear!  
A black harm to all and each,  
A disease that none may leech,

And the evil plot to mar  
All help and hope is far.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Compare the following choral hymn from Aeschylus' *The Suppliants*. Both quotations are from Blackie's translation in the Everyman's Library edition, pages 74, 251.

CHORAL HYMN

Strophe I

*Semi-Chorus 1.* Lift ye the solemn hymn!  
High let your paeans brim!  
Praise in your strain  
Gods that in glory reign  
High o'er the Argive plain,  
High o'er each castled hold,  
Where Erasinus old  
Winds to the main!

*Semi-Chorus 2. (To the attendant maids).*  
Sing, happy maids, with me!  
Loud with responsive glee  
Voice ye the strain!  
Praise ye the Argive shore,  
Praise holy Nile no more,  
Wide where his waters roar,  
Mixed with the main!

Antistrophe I

*Semi-Chorus 1.* Lift ye the solemn hymn!  
High let your paeans brim!  
Praise in your strain  
Torrents that bravely swell  
Fresh through each Argive dell,  
Broad streams that lazily  
Wander, and mazily  
Fatten the plain.

*Semi-Chorus 2.* Sing, sisters, sing with me  
Artemis chaste! may she  
List to the strain!  
Never, O never may  
Marriage with fearful sway  
Bind me; nor I obey  
Hatefullest chain!

In a surviving manuscript of the old Latin, a very early Latin poem shows us that the primitive poetry of ancient Rome—this is held to be centuries before Virgil, Horace, and Ovid—was also rhythmically repetitious.

THE CARMEN ARVALE<sup>29</sup>

Give us aid, O Lares.

Give us aid, O Lares.

Give us aid, O Lares.

Nor allow us to encounter plague and destruction.

Nor allow us to encounter plague and destruction.

Nor allow us to encounter plague and destruction.

Let this be enough, fierce Mars, stay thy scourge.

Let this be enough, fierce Mars, stay thy scourge.

Let this be enough, fierce Mars, stay thy scourge.

<sup>29</sup> The original Latin *Carmen Arvale*, discovered at Rome, is inscribed among the *Act Collegii Fratrum Arvalium* of A.D. 218 (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Vol. I, sec. 28).

## CARMEN ARVALE

enos Lases iuate.

enos Lases iuate.

enos Lases iuate.

neue lue rue Marmar sins incurrere in pleoris.

neue lue rue Marmar sins incurrere in pleoris.

neue lue rue Marmar sins incurrere in pleoris

satur fu fere Mars limen sali sta berber.

satur fu fere Mars limen sali sta berber.

satur fu fere Mars limen sali sta berber.



Let each one in turn call the demigod.  
 Let each one in turn call the demigod.  
 Let each one in turn call the demigod.

May Marmor give us aid.  
 May Marmor give us aid.  
 May Marmor give us aid.

Triumph!  
 Triumph!  
 Triumph!  
 Triumph!  
 Triumph!

The early poetry of both Japan and China also reveals the natural tendency to reiterate a prevailing poetic emotion. The primitive form obtains even down to the more modern times. Perhaps a typical *Tanka* from the Japanese, with its translation, may serve to make clear the repetition of the underlying emotion—here the emotion of resignation (theme):

---

semunis alternei aduocapit conctos  
 semunis alternei aduocapit conctos.  
 semunis alternei aduocapit conctos.

enos Marmor iuuato.  
 enos Marmor iuuato.  
 enos Marmor iuuato.

triumpe.  
 triumpe.  
 triumpe.  
 triumpe.  
 triumpe.

Hana wo mitsu  
Hototogisu wo mo  
Kiki-hatatsu —  
Kono yo nochi no yo  
Omou koto nashi.

In a *Tanka*, the thought breaks at the end of the third line, as indicated by the dash. The translation is as follows:

I've seen the flowers bloom and fade,  
I have heard out the cuckoo's note:  
Neither in this world is there aught,  
Nor in the next to make me sad.

That is to say, the poet has faced the ending of beautiful things, has seen them pass away, and feels that having endured such sorrow he can calmly approach any other pang.<sup>30</sup> Among Chinese poetry, likewise, we find, even in a more modern period, the same rhythmical repetition of the underlying theme. Note the reiteration of sadness in the following:

Green, green,  
The grass by the river-bank.  
Thick, thick,  
The willow trees in the garden.  
Sad, sad,  
The lady in the tower.  
White, white,

<sup>30</sup> For other Japanese poems illustrating repetitious parallelism, see in Chamberlain's *Japanese Poetry and the Ancient Sacred Books of Japan* the following: *A Stag's Lament*, *Character of the Lotus Gospel*, *A Lament* (on the death of the Prince of Mino, c. 708 A.D.), *The Man-Yoshu*, and *Battle* by Ch'u Yuan (332-295 B.C.), author of the famous Japanese poem, *Li Sao* or *Falling into Trouble*.

Sitting at the casement window.  
Fair, fair,  
Her red-powdered face.  
Small, small,  
She puts out her pale hand.  
Once she was a dancing-house girl,  
Now she is a wandering man's wife.  
The wandering man went, but did not return.  
It is hard alone to keep an empty bed.<sup>31</sup>

Our own Anglo-Saxon (Nordic) forefathers originally expressed their emotions in the primitive repetitious fashion identical with that of other races and nations. We must remember that most of the Anglo-Saxon poetry we now have in manuscript form<sup>32</sup> is "modernized" as it were, that is, it is not in the earliest and original form of our Anglo-Saxon poetry but is a literary version—quite formal in verse structure, and representing our early poetry at a late period when the balanced form had become stereotyped and fixed, for the most part, by priests in monasteries of the seventh to the eleventh century. Practically all of it shows the marked imprint of Christian precepts. Perhaps the very earliest Anglo-Saxon that we have is found in the pagan *Riddles*.<sup>33</sup> A sample in the original will reveal their parallel repetitious nature. The pagan note obtains.

<sup>31</sup> From Arthur Waley's *170 Chinese Poems*, page 60. See also "South of the Great Sea" in the same volume.

<sup>32</sup> *Beowulf* and *Judith* in the British Museum, the *Caedmon Poems* in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, the *Exeter Book* in the Exeter Cathedral Library in England, the *Cynewulf Poems* in the Cathedral Library at Vercelli, Italy.

<sup>33</sup> See Tupper's *The Riddles of the Exeter Book*, Wyatt's *Old English Riddles*.

þis me to bote þære laþan laetbyrde  
 þis me to bote þære swæran swaertbyrde  
 þis me to bote þære laðan lambyrde.<sup>84</sup>

"The Charm for a Sudden Stitch," very much older in its initial form than *Beowulf*, is here given with its curious mixture of introductory prose directions for preparation, its pagan incantation, and its pagan-Christian conjuration and prayer at the close. Its parallel reiterations are obvious.

## CHARM FOR A SUDDEN STITCH

Take feverfew, and plantain, and the red nettle that grows into the house. Boil in butter. Say:

Loud was their cry as they came o'er the hill,  
 Fierce was their rage as they rode o'er the land.  
 Take heed and be healed of the hurt they have done thee.

*Out little spear if in there thou be!*

My shield I lifted, my linden-wood shining,  
 And sent their spear-points spinning toward me.  
 I'll give them back the bolt they sent,  
 A flying arrow full in the face.

*Out little spear if in there thou be!*

Sat a smith,

A hard blade hammered.

*Out little spear if in there thou be!*

<sup>84</sup> Grein-Wülcker's *Bibliothèque der angelsächsischen poesie* 1, 327, Seventh Charm, lines 4-6. See also *ibid.*, page 315, First Charm, lines 50-57, page 318, Second Charm, lines 20-26; page 320, Third Charm, lines 8-11, page 329, Eighth Charm, lines 21 ff.

A most scholarly article containing evidence supporting the idea that our earliest Anglo-Saxon verse was repetitious is J. W. Rankin's "Rhythm and Rime before the Norman Conquest," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXVI, 401-428; see also James Routh's "Prose Rhythms," *ibid.*, XXXVIII, 685-697.

Six smiths sat,  
 Fighting spears forged they.  
*Out spear, out!*  
*No longer stay in!*  
 If any iron be found hegin,  
 The work of the witches, away it must melt.  
 Be thou shot in the fell,  
 Be thou shot in the flesh,  
 Be thou shot in the blood,  
 Be thou shot in the bone,  
 Be thou shot in the limb,  
 Thy life shall be shielded.  
 Be it shot of Esa,  
 Be it shot of Elves,  
 Be it shot of Hags,  
 I help thee surely.  
 This for cure of Esa-shot,  
 This for cure of Elf-shot,  
 This for cure of Hag-shot,  
 I help thee surely.  
 Witch fly away to the woods and the mountains.  
 Healed be thy hurt! So help thee the Lord.<sup>35</sup>

It need not be demonstrated that such rhychnical repetition occurs in highly emotional prose also. Any heartfelt prayer, any impassioned public address, any bit of highly wrought fiction is characterized by reiterations. Biblical (King James Version) prose is full of it—see the passages

<sup>35</sup> Translation is by J. Duncan Spaeth in his *Old English Poetry*. Such charms are not native to Nordic folk only, they are found in nearly all literatures of the world. See the several literatures in the volumes of *Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, say, Volume I, "Babylon and Assyria," pages 71, 234. Burns's *Halloween* is really a charm. Gummere's *Germanic Origins* has an excellent discussion of charms.

known as "Paul before Agrippa" and the "Story of the Prodigal Son." The orations of Demosthenes, Cicero, and Fox are replete with it. We see it and feel it in Lincoln's "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away" John Bright, during the Crimean War, said: "The angel of death has been abroad in the land; we may almost hear the beating of his wings." Robert G. Ingersoll, speaking eloquently of Voltaire, declared, "Through darkness of faith and fable, through darkness of myth and miracle, through the midnight of superstition, through the blackness of bigotry, past cathedral and dungeon, past rack and stake, past altar and throne, he carried with chivalric hands the sacred torch of reason." In the prose of Edward Everett occurs the passage: "Faint streaks of purple soon blushed along the sky; the whole celestial concave was filled with the inflowing tides of the morning light." This is as repetitious, but not so poetical, as Shakespeare's

Night's candles are burned out and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain top.

Such parallelism in prose sounds mightily like the parallelism of poetry. Says Marlowe:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

Says Edwin Markham in his "Man with the Hoe,"

How will you ever straighten up this shape,  
Touch it again with immortality,  
Give back the upward looking and the light,  
Rebuild it in the music and the dream?

And Lowell wrote,

The brute despair of trampled centuries  
Leapt up with one hoarse yell and snapt its bands,  
Groped for its right with thorny, callous hands,  
And stared around for God with bloodshot eyes.

A generation or two ago, Sprague, in impassioned prose, wrote of the American Indian in the following repetitious, rhythmical parallelism:<sup>86</sup>

Not many generations ago where you now sit encircled by all that exalts and embellishes civilized life, the rank thistle nodded in the wind and the wild fox dug his hole unscared. Beneath the same sun that rolls over your head, the Indian hunter pursued the panting deer; gazing on the same moon that smiles for you the Indian lover wooed his dusky mate. Here the wigwam blaze beamed on the tender and helpless and the council-fire glared on the wise and daring. Now they dipped their noble limbs in your sedgy lakes, now they paddled their light canoes along your winding streams. Here they warred, the echoing whoop, the bloody grapple, the defying death-song, all were here; and, when the tiger strife was over, here curled the smoke of peace.

Here too they worshipped, and from many a dark bosom went up a fervent prayer to the Great Spirit. God had not written his laws for them on tables of stone, but he had traced them on the tables of their hearts. The poor Indian knew nothing of the God of Revelation, but the God of the Universe he acknowledged in everything around. He beheld him in the star that sank in beauty behind his lonely dwelling; in the great orb that flamed on him from his mid-

<sup>86</sup> See William Morrison Patterson's *The Rhythm of Prose*, Columbia University Press, James Routh's "Prose Rhythms," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXVIII, 685-697; C. M. Latspeich's "Poetry, Prose, and Rhythm," *ibid.*, XXXVII, 292-310, F. N. Scott's "The Most Fundamental Differentia of Poetry and Prose," *ibid.*, XIX, 250 ff.

day throne; in the flower that snapped in the morning breeze; in the lofty oak that defied a thousand whirlwinds; in the timid warbler that never left his native grove; in the fearless eagle whose untired pinion was wet in clouds, in the worm that crawled at his feet; and in his own matchless form. . . . .

Nor need it be demonstrated that such rhythmical repetition appears in every kind of creative art, in poetry, painting, sculpture, music, architecture, and dancing. *Rhythm is the fundamental of all art.* The "Venus de Milo," masterpiece of woman's physical beauty, is a sequence of rhythmic lines from any angle of view—if from the top, a rhythmic curve over the side of the head and face, over the rounded shoulder, over the full chest, over the hip, over the thigh, over the lower leg, along the foot, to the pedestal on which it stands. Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa"—the smooth flow of the hair, the quiet smile on the rounded mouth, the oval forehead, the full swelling chest, the rounded shoulders, the gentle falling drapery over the forearms, the lithe dimpled fingers—is rhythm, repeated rhythm in pretty much the same circular arc as the Venus. Hogarth's "Gin Lane" repeats its theme again and again "in the woman on the stairs of the bridge asleep, letting her child fall over; her ghastly companion opposite, next to death's door, with hollow famished cheeks and staring ribs; the dog fighting with the man for the bare shin-bone; the man hanging himself in a garret; the female corpse put into a coffin by the parish beadle; the men marching after a funeral, seen through a broken wall in the background; and the very houses reeling as if drunk and tumbling about the ears of the unfortunate victims below, the pawn-broker being the only one that stands firm and unimpaired." In Hogarth's "Enraged Musician," the central idea of discord is repeatedly suggested "by the razor grinder



turning his wheel; the boy with his drum, and the girl with her rattle momentarily suspended; the pursuivant blowing his horn; the shrill milkwoman; the inexorable ballad-singer with her squalling infant; the fisherwomen; the chimney sweeper at the top of the chimney, and the two cats in melodious concert on the ridge of the tiles; with the bells ringing in the distance—as we see the flags flying”; and, he might have added, the hunting dog whose tail had been stepped on and the squalling parrot outside the window.<sup>87</sup> And in music, every opera, every oratorio, every cantata, every fugue, every sonata, in its movements reverts again and again to its dominant theme. In *Tannhäuser*, for example, the theme of the beautiful Venus motif is reiterated. Wagner, as in the instance of the theme of the spirit victory in his *Walküre*, especially distinguished himself by constructing and composing his great operas so as to revert constantly to the underlying dominant *leit-motif*, and thus to emphasize it.

And lastly it must be perfectly obvious to the reader that this flowing rhythm that we find so common to creative poetic expression in every race and in every clime—and in all the other creative arts as well—is *not* meter. Meter, as we shall see in the chapter given to it, is a form of rhythm, but is not the rhythm we have been discussing in this chapter. “All meter is rhythm; yet not all rhythm is meter.” Rhythm differs from meter inasmuch as rhythm is relative proportion applied to any flowing motion whatever; meter, on the other hand, is somewhat mechanical proportion applied to motion of syllables and words as they appear in a sentence or line of poetry. Rhythm defies any exact unit of measure; meter

<sup>87</sup> Both paintings are analyzed in Lamborn's *The Rudiments of Criticism*, pages 110, 109.

exists by virtue of the very fact of regularly alternating long or short, stressed or unstressed syllables, etc. The rhythm of a dactyl line and that of an anapest line are the same; the meters are different. Meter, in short, cannot exist independent of articulate sounds; while rhythm may be seen and felt in any sequence of meaningless vocables, as in the instance of emotional utterances of primitive folk before they developed an artificial language. Rhythm is the large emotional flow that naturally recurs in terms of the law of supply and exhaustion when human expression reaches the intensity of the creatively poetical. It appears primarily in relatively prolonged repetitious parallelism. Meter, on the other hand, is mechanical and appears in short groups of long and short or stressed and unstressed syllables. Thus if we read the following line, we find that it is one full and sustained rhythmic emotional utterance:

Jolly mortals, fill your glasses; noble deeds are done by wine.

But this large full movement is also divided into two minor rhythms; thus:

Jolly mortals, fill your glasses; noble deeds are done by wine.

And the rhetorical values in the lines make, again, for "minor" rhythms within the minor rhythms; thus:

Jolly mortals, fill your glasses; noble deeds are done by wine.

On the other hand, the meter of the line has nothing to do per se with the larger organic rhythms: here it is a matter of

mechanical arrangement of alternately stressed and unstressed syllables. Thus:

Jol-ly | mor-tals, | fill your | glass-es; | no-ble | deeds are | done  
by | wine.

Of course, every good reading of a line of poetry observes both the organic rhythm and the mechanical meter at one and the same time. But creative poetry begins and, moreover, persists in organic form, and is not inclined to let itself shift wholly into any strait-jacket of mechanical formality. Rhythm is not meter!

#### RHYTHM IN MODERN POETRY

"Man," asserts Prescott, "is a social being to whom communication is necessary, isolation terrifying. Merely 'to open one's mind' is healthful and comforting. But this is particularly true in passion or mental tension. The lover is relieved by confessing his passion. The criminal is often instinctively driven to relief in confession. The man in anger must 'speak his mind,' or 'have it out.' 'He often finds present help who does his grief impart' (*Faerie Queene*, II, i, 46)."<sup>28</sup>

There is "the instinctive wish to communicate," said John Keble. Lear's thrice-repeated "never" is a cry of all but divine despair. And Richard II's

A little grave,  
A little, little grave!

is the sustained anguish of a broken heart. And when Coleridge wrote

Alone, alone, all, all, alone,  
Alone on a wide, wide sea.

<sup>28</sup> *The Poetic Mind*, page 273.

he meant just that: the utter loneliness of a penitent heart.  
And Scott's

Breathes there a man with soul so dead,  
wells with patriotic pride just as

Hame, hame, hame, O hame fain wad I be—

O Hame, Hame, Hame, to my ain countree!

expresses the patriot's yearning for his own native heath and beloved ingle nook. "It is the nature of grief," held Burke, "to keep its object perpetually in its eye, to present it in its most pleasurable veins—to find a thousand new perfections in all that were not sufficiently understood before." Whether the dominating emotion be grief, joy, anger, or devotion, the human soul, in its moments of deepest functioning, will continue to repeat its expression until the controlling emotion has subsided. Indeed George Bernard Shaw was right when he said that the task is "to keep a man from repeating it too much."

When we look at our modern poetry, say from the time of Chaucer, we see on the printed page rime, stanza form, meter, and other details of technique; but really these are accretions and developments that have grown out of certain earlier fundamentals in our poetic expression. They are valuable in their way and yet are, in a measure, somewhat needless unessentials to much good poetry. They are not the things that make exalting verse; they only aid in bringing out the poetry in a poem, they are means to an end; they are organic agencies for emphasis. The interesting thing is that if we examine modern poetry closely, we detect, amid the confusing presence of rime, stanza form, meter, and complex ideas, the very same fundamentals that are present in primitive poetic utterance, though now a bit hidden. Everywhere

we find rhythmical repetitious parallelism of emotion, of idea, and of phrase. Rhythm obtains (1) in purely one-line parallelism, (2) in the more complex though ordered repetitious parallelism in our more conventional poetic forms, and (3) in the free rhythmic expression in our so-called free verse.

Really one of the amazing things in our modern English poetry is the actual prevalence of so much one-line rhythmical repetitious parallelism. From the anonymous writers of lyrics of the early thirteenth century to Vachel Lindsay and Edgar Lee Masters, not to mention Walt Whitman, its quantity is all but unbelievable. If we turn to, say, the *Oxford Book of English Verse*,<sup>89</sup> to the poem, "Blow, Northern Wind" (circa 1300), we find sustained repetitious passages like the following:

Heo [she] is coral of godnesse,  
 Heo is rubie of ryhtfulnesse,  
 Heo is cristal of clannesse,  
     And baner of bealte.  
 Heo is lile of largesse,  
 Heo is parvenk of prouesses,  
 Heo is solsecle of suetnesse,  
     And lady of lealte.

Sir Thomas Wyatt's "Forget Not Yet" and "The Appeal," George Peele's "Fair and Fair," and nearly every one of

<sup>89</sup> For other examples of repetitious parallelism in the *Oxford Book of English Verse* see Nos. 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 20, 23, 34, 35, 43, 44, 56, 67, 178, 204, 206, 217, 237, 429, 510, 514, 567, 582, 604, 668, 687, 692, 696, 740, 747, 752, 766, 779, 780, 781, 782, 800, 828, 842, 847, 848, 877, 881. See also Carleton Brown's *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century* for many examples of repetitious parallelism in our poetry before Chaucer.

Shakespeare's<sup>40</sup> pure lyrics are much just such simple rhythmic repetitions with slight modifications. If we turn to Burns, the number of his poems in this elementary reiterative form is found to be incredibly large. For a taste:

O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad!  
O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad!  
Tho' father and mither and a' should gae mad,  
O whistle, and I'll come to you my lad!<sup>41</sup>

Turn where we will, this reiterative parallelism appears: to Browning's "Boot and Saddle" and "Give a Rouse" (*Cavalier Songs*), to Kingsley's "The Sands o' Dee," and to Tennyson's "Sweet and Low," "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and "Nothing Will Die," which runs:

When will the stream be aweary of flowing  
Under the eye?  
When will the wind be aweary of blowing  
Over the sky?  
When will the clouds be aweary of fleeting?  
When will the heart be aweary of beating?  
And nature die?  
Never, O, never, nothing will die;  
The stream flows,  
The wind blows,  
The cloud fleets,  
The heart beats,  
Nothing will die.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. "Under the Greenwood Tree," "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind," "It Was a Lover and His Lass," "When Daisies Pied," etc.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. his "Farewell to Nancy," "Afton Water," "My Wife's a Winsome Wee Thing," "Here's a Health to Them That's Awa," "What Can a Young Lassie Do wi' an Old Man," "My Heart's in the Highlands," "Bannockburn," etc.

Perhaps the most often quoted poem from the group of which *In Memoriam* is comprised is cvi, "Ring Out, Wild Bells." It is organically rhythmical, repetitious, parallel in phrasing: its dominant emotion is sustained throughout:

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light:  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:  
The year is going, let him go,  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,  
For those that here we see no more;  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,  
And ancient forms of party strife,  
Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,  
The faithless coldness of the times;  
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,  
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

The recent attention given to free verse has served but to bring to the fore again much of primitive parallelism—certainly not a new aspect of poetic expression as the uninformed have thought. Whether we cite Vachel Lindsay's "The Congo," "General William Booth Enters Heaven," or quote from his "The Potato's Dance," the primitive form appears:

"Down cellar," said the cricket,  
"Down cellar," said the cricket,  
"Down cellar," said the cricket,  
"I saw a ball last night,  
In honor of a lady,  
In honor of a lady,  
In honor of a lady,  
Whose wings were pearly white."

Vachel Lindsay is more than merely a modern singing troubadour. Though we sophisticated adults have somewhat outgrown his repetitious chants, our children have not done so—and should we not also remain as children to enjoy poetry? He has done more to bring our attention back to organic rhythm as a fundamental in poetry than has any one other factor in contemporary poetic activity. From Whitman's



"There Was a Child Went Forth" to Carl Sandburg's "Chicago" and "Cool Tombs" there has been a return to fundamentals. Perhaps not even the Psalms, some parts of the Book of Job, and parts of Ecclesiastes more effectively have spoken the anguish of the human heart than has Edgar Lee Masters' "Silence," which we quote in full:

## SILENCE

I have known the silence of the stars and of the sea,  
And the silence of the city when it pauses,  
And the silence of a man and a maid,  
And the silence for which music alone finds the word,  
And the silence of the woods before the winds of spring begin,  
And the silence of the sick  
When their eyes roam about the room.  
And I ask For the depths  
Of what use is language?  
A beast of the field moans a few times  
When death takes its young.  
And we are voiceless in the presence of realities—  
We cannot speak.

A curious boy asks an old soldier  
Sitting in front of the grocery store,  
"How did you lose your leg?"  
And the old soldier is struck with silence.  
Or his mind flies away  
Because he cannot concentrate it on Gettysburg.  
It comes back jocosely  
And he says, "A bear bit it off."

And the boy wonders, while the old soldier  
Dumbly, feebly lives over  
The flashes of guns, the thunder of cannon,  
The shrieks of the slain,

And himself lying on the ground,  
And the hospital surgeons, the knives,  
And the long days in bed.  
But if he could describe it all  
He would be an artist.  
But if he were an artist there would be deeper wounds  
Which he could not describe.

There is the silence of a great hatred,  
And the silence of a great love,  
And the silence of a deep peace of mind,  
And the silence of an embittered friendship,  
There is the silence of a spiritual crisis,  
Through which your soul, exquisitely tortured,  
Comes with visions not to be uttered  
Into a realm of higher life.  
And the silence of the gods who understand each other without  
speech,  
There is the silence of defeat.  
There is the silence of those unjustly punished,  
And the silence of the dying whose hand  
Suddenly grips yours.  
There is the silence between father and son,  
When the father cannot explain his life,  
Even though he be misunderstood for it.

There is the silence that comes between husband and wife.  
There is the silence of those who have failed,  
And the vast silence that covers  
Broken nations and vanquished leaders.  
There is the silence of Lincoln,  
Thinking of the poverty of his youth.  
And the silence of Napoleon  
After Waterloo.

And the silence of Jeanne d'Arc  
Saying amid the flames, "Blessed Jesus"—  
Revealing in two words all sorrow, all hope.  
And there is the silence of age,  
Too full of wisdom for the tongue to utter it  
In words intelligible to those who have not lived  
The great range of life.  
And there is the silence of the dead.  
If we who are in life cannot speak  
Of profound experiences,  
Why do you marvel that the dead  
Do not tell you of death?  
Their silence shall be interpreted  
As we approach them.<sup>42</sup>

It is a far cry from the primitive Piute chant,  
The cottonwoods are growing tall.  
The cottonwoods are growing tall.

and other folk-poetry cited earlier in this chapter to the powerful and exalting lines of Whitman or these quoted from Masters' "Silence." The fact remains that both serve as the means of expressing the deep and sustained emotions of the human heart: whether one is primitivé and the other modern is a question of no import; the significant fact is that both are organically rhythmical, they are both repetitious and parallel in their phrasing. And both are poetry!<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Paul Verlaine's "A Confession," the first stanza of which runs:

O my God, thou hast wounded me with love,  
Behold the wound that is still vibrating,  
O my God, thou hast wounded me with love.

<sup>43</sup> Discussions of the recent tendency in poetry may be found in Amy Lowell's *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*, Untermeyer's *The New Era in American Poetry*, and Lowes's *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*.

Whatever be the degree of our appreciation of the repetitious nature of primitive poetical utterance and however much this reiterative form may reappear in modern poetry, lovers of poetry nowadays would not care to have all our poetic output of that kind. Nor is the case of that sort. So long as man's mind and life remained more or less simplified, his sustained emotional utterance would remain simplified, as we have found primitive poetry to be; but with the ever-increasing complexities in man's environment, giving rise more and more to the presence of motivating ideas and philosophical thoughts, his poetic utterance, while still retaining its organic form, likewise takes on a more complex form. There still remains something of the rhythmical repetition of his emotions, but these emotions are given more specific direction and emphasis—now longer now shorter in duration—by ideas that are injected into the expression of his instinctive feelings. Accordingly, step by step in the evolution of poetic form, no longer are man's emotions limited merely to the repeated parallel lines, each one forming a simplified and complete unit in itself, such as,

The cottonwoods are growing tall.

The cottonwoods are growing tall.

The cottonwoods are growing tall.

But a given sustained emotion sometimes runs beyond the normal line-length, runs sometimes through several line-lengths perhaps, and once in a while is much shorter than the ordinary line-length. The gradual change in poetic form from the simplified regularly repeated one-line rhythm to the more variable rhythm lengths in modern poetry would be an interesting topic for discussion and illustration but must not concern us here. An examination of any anthology of

our early English poems will quickly demonstrate that there has been an organic enlargement of the rhythmical possibilities from the simplified one-line unit to the limit that includes more than one line and sometimes many lines.

Thus when Shelley wrote his "To a Skylark," his emotion, though sustained and exalting, was directed by ideas that never would have occurred to a primitive man. A primitive poet would have poured forth his emotion of exaltation in simplified repetitions; but Shelley's heart, now less full, then full to bursting, could not well put his emotion into a strait-jacket of simplified one-line-length reiterations. Accordingly, Shelley's outbursts sometimes are expressed within the line length but more often run far beyond the one line-length into two lines and even three or more! Swinburne, in his "Hertha," likewise in expressing his emotion, here given unusual significance by a philosophic idea of modern thinking man, sometimes can confine his minor emotional rhythm to one line-length but more often runs it throughout several lines. Note the powerful rhythm of the last three lines sustained by the minor rhythm in each individual line.

A creed is a rod,  
And a crown is of night,  
But this thing is God,  
To be man with thy might,  
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live  
out thy life as the light.

Thomas Edward Brown's "My Garden" is a gem of rhythmic utterance. Artificial line-length has no terrors for him: if a single line-length suffices to express his sustained emotion for the moment, all is well and good; but if it so

surges that he is impelled to run on into the next line, he does so without hesitation. The artificially printed line-length as it appears on a modern printed page is not organic, and really creative poetic functioning will not be hemmed in by any such prescription.

## MY GARDEN

A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!

Rose plot,

Fringed pool

Fern'd grot—

The veriest school

Of peace, and yet the fool

Contentds that God is not—

Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool?

Nay, but I have a sign;

'Tis very sure God walks in mine.

Whether we turn to Browning's "My Star," to Bret Harte's "What the Bullet Sang," to Dryden's "Ode to St. Cecilia's Day," to Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," to Arnold's "Philomela" or his "Dover Beach," we find that the organic rhythmical flow is not impeded by line-length. The emotion of seeming futility of life is repeated frequently in the following excerpt from Arnold's "Rugby Chapel," but the rhythmic movements are not in any wise limited to or retrenched by the printed line-length. Here we still have rhythmic repetition of feeling and ideas so characteristic of primitive poetry, but here it is not expressed in terms of identical words and identical line-lengths.

What is the course of the life  
 Of mortal men on the earth?—  
 Most men eddy about  
 Here and there—eat and drink,  
 Chatter and love and hate,  
 Gather and squander, are raised  
 Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,  
 Striving blindly, achieving  
 Nothing, and then they die—  
 Perish,—and no one asks  
 Who or what they have been,  
 More than he asks what waves,  
 In the moonlit solitudes mild  
 Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,  
 Foam'd for a moment, and gone.<sup>44</sup>

Contrary to a prevailing belief in many minds, rhythmic repetitious flow of emotion finds most effective expression in our blank verse. While in it there is little actual parallelism of phrasing there is reiteration of the same idea and repetition of the same sustained feeling. Did ever poet conceive and express the spirit of divine harmony in human souls that love as did Shakespeare when, in *The Merchant of Venice*, he has Lorenzo say to Jessica:

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!  
 Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
 Creep in our ears soft stillness and the night

<sup>44</sup> Could be printed as vers libre—would have been in 1900. For other poems showing marked rhythm, see the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Nos. 6, 11, 31, 34, 35, 56, 57, 60, 71, 77, 96, 121, 209, 224, 236, 248, 251, 252, 283, 292, 327, 436, 486, 503, 523, 524, 525, 528, 529, 530, 546, 549, 567, 608, 610, 651, 695, 696, 697, 700, 702, 720, 729, 739, 742, 747, 752, 754, 793, 809, 813, 819, 843, 845, 867, 881, 883.

Become the touches of sweet harmony.  
Sit, Jessica: look, how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patinas of bright gold.  
There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins.  
Such harmony is in immortal souls:  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.<sup>45</sup>

And what is more stirring than the several times repeated emotion of vigorous and sincere exultation of patriotism voiced by Henry V to his troops before the battle of Agincourt, in *Henry V*?

He which hath no stomach to this fight,  
Let him depart, his passport shall be made,  
And crowns for convoy put into his purse:  
We would not die in that man's company  
That fears his fellowship to die with us.  
This day is call'd the feast of Crispian  
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,  
Will stand a tiptoe when this day is nam'd,  
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.  
He that shall live this day, and see old age,  
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors,  
And say "Tomorrow is Saint Crispian"  
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,  
And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's day."  
Old men forget, yet all shall be forgot,  
But he'll remember with advantages  
What feats he did that day: then shall our names,  
Familiar in his mouth as household words—

<sup>45</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, v, i, 54-65.



Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,  
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester—  
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.  
This story shall the good man teach his son;  
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered,  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers:  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition:  
And gentlemen in England now abed  
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.<sup>46</sup>

It is the underlying emotion of this excerpt—given direction and significance by the idea that he is fortunate indeed whose lot it shall be to participate in the battle of the morrow—which, by being constantly held before us through being several times repeated, stirs us, even today, to the very depths, as its original utterance must have also stirred the English soldiery to whom it was addressed in 1415.<sup>47</sup> To Shakespeare and to us, Henry V was a gallant king: sincere, honest, patriotic, loyal to his native land and to his friends. It

<sup>46</sup> *Henry V*, IV, iii, 35-67.

<sup>47</sup> For other examples of similar reiteration in blank verse see Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, scene xiv, lines 75-121; Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book I, lines 34-49; II, 51-105; III, 227-265; Tennyson's *Ulysses*, *Morte D'Arthur*, *The Princess*, Part I, lines 57-66; IV, 520-527, V, 143-153 and 472-531; and his *Idylls of the King* "The Marriage of Geraint," lines 41-67, "Lancelot and Elaine," lines 120-134, "The Last Tournament," lines 77-87.

is this sincere and sustained emotion that appears in the exalting rhythmic repetition in this excerpt from our England's greatest bard. The rhythm is organic. And unless our attention is directed to the fact, we will not have noticed that these passages are in unrimed iambic pentameter.

And from the point of view of organic rhythm, our so-called free verse needs no defense. We have always had free verse, we have free verse today, and we always shall have free verse. Primitive poetry is fundamentally free in its rhythms; Arnold's "The Strayed Reveller" is *vers libre*; and Edgar Lee Masters' "Silence" and Amy Lowell's "Patterns" are among our finest examples of contemporary free verse. The mass of Hebrew poetry is essentially free verse, free in its rhythms; likewise much of Babylonian, Egyptian, Chinese, and Japanese poetic utterance is essentially free verse; and Matthew Arnold's own practice of poesy, with his ever careful attention to classical form, is the more significant to us now, after our recent emphasis on *vers libre*, because he arrived in "The Strayed Reveller," in "Dover Beach," and in "Philomela" and other poems at a very effective use of unrimed verse, and gave us, paradoxically enough surely, free verse by a classic revoke. Already we have quoted Oscar Wilde: "In his very rejection of art, Walt Whitman was an artist." It need not be pointed out that the Pindaric Ode form of expression is essentially free in its organic rhythms; our English examples, such as Dryden's "Alexander's Feast," Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," and Tennyson's "Ode on the Duke of Wellington," are unusually free in their rhythmic reiterations, as even a cursory examination will show. Really there is nothing new in free verse. On the contrary, it is the more natural way of expressing our poetic ideas and feelings. The

amazing thing is that English poetry has, at times, swung so far into the formalities of meter, rime, and stanza form, when, in fact, vers libre is far more natural and certainly more organic as a mode of expressing sustained and heightened emotional functioning.<sup>48</sup>

Now the important distinguishing characteristic of free verse is that it prints the "minor" rhythms—the very short impulse or the individual phrase (speech unit)—in the form of very short line-lengths quite as often as it prints, in longer and full line-lengths, the larger minor rhythms. Such a poem as Thomas Edward Brown's "My Garden," cited above, is printed essentially in cadenced free verse form. Alice Corbin's "Music" exemplifies how, for purpose of emphasizing them, the "minor" rhythms (a phrase or even a word) are printed by themselves as individual lines. There is no well-defined meter and no rime scheme in the poem. there is "paragraphing," but no stanza form. The poem as a unit is one full, sustained, rhythmic utterance; the minor rhythms (usually line-lengths) are intensified by being printed as full lines, but not infrequently the "minor" rhythms (phrases, words) are also individualized by appearing as separate units, as it were, in the printed form. Every mechanical device is thus employed to emphasize the organic rhythms. Surely, even the most unyielding devotee of formalities in poetry will not object to this endeavor to intensify the rhythmical effect of creative poetic utterance. Much excellent poetry appears in the conventions of meter, rime, and stanza form, but these have no monopoly on good poetic expression. We quote Alice Corbin's poem:

<sup>48</sup> For discussions of vers libre see Amy Lowell's *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*, Lowes's *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*, Patterson's *The Rhythm of Prose*, and Monroe's *Poets and Their Art*.

MUSIC

*The ancient songs  
Pass deathward.. mournfully.*

—R. A.

The old songs  
Die.  
Yes, the old songs die.  
Cold lips that sang them,  
Cold lips that sang them—  
The old songs die,  
And the lips that sang them  
Are only a pinch of dust.

I saw in Pamplona  
In a musty museum—  
I saw in Pamplona  
In a buff-colored museum—  
I saw in Pamplona  
A memorial  
Of the dead violinist,  
I saw in Pamplona  
A memorial  
Of Pablo Sarasate.

Dust was inch-deep on the cases,  
Dust on the stick-pins and satins,  
Dust on the badges and orders,  
On the wreath from the oak of Guernica!

The old songs  
Die—  
And the lips that sang them.

Wreaths, withered and dusty,  
Cuff-buttons with royal insignia,  
These, in a musty museum,  
Are all that is left of Sarasate.

Few of our free verse poems are equal in poetic value to Amy Lowell's "Patterns." The emotion of repressed grief (theme) at the loss of one near and dear is heart-rending. Its pathos is really terrible. Every hint of her grief, every reappearance of it, however slight, pulls and tugs at the very innermost fiber of her emotional being. Comment on such a poem as "Patterns" is puerile. We need to read it in the same mood, as nearly as we can approach it, in which it was conceived and written in order to sense the delicate yet powerful beauty of the organic rhythms in the poem. You will not fail to note how this rhythm again and again approaches a primitive repetitious parallelism, as in "I shall walk up and down the garden paths," and "In my stiff brocaded gown." Above all the emotional rhythms are intensified and enhanced by the organically irregular line-lengths. A single strophe will illustrate:

And I walked into the garden,  
Up and down the patterned paths,  
In my stiff, correct brocade.  
The blue and yellow flowers stood up proudly in the sun,  
Each one.  
I stood upright too,  
Held rigid to the pattern  
By the stiffness of my gown.  
Up and down I walked,  
Up and down.

It was not without justification, then, that Amy Lowell


championed, with others, the cause of vers libre. To the informed, however, it did not require championing. Vers libre always has been in the heart of man. More than once there has been, in the history of poetry, a return to the simpler rhythmical forms, and so long as we have conventions in poesy there always will be such returns or revolts. The important admonition is that when such poets as Walt Whitman, Matthew Arnold, Carl Sandburg, Amy Lowell, and other well-known ones speak, we should have a sympathetic ear to listen, for they may tell us still more about the organic principles of poetry than we now know. In any instance the recurrence of a movement in free verse would have justified itself tenfold had it done nothing more than to remind us once again—unwilling listeners as we are—that the fundamental aspect of creative poetic expression is organic rhythm! And organic rhythm is not identical with meter!



## CHAPTER IV

### *ORGANIC PATTERN IN A POEM*

#### PATTERN IN THE POEM AS A WHOLE

N CREATIVE art of any sort there are always two considerations: there is (1) the impulse and (2) the control. The impulse in the instance of pure poetry, as we have seen, is essentially emotional in manifestation—intense, sustained, exalting emotion—when at its best and finest. It has not been so much what man has thought that has moved him to speak but what he has felt in his heart. Poetry is as deep as the well-springs of our own organic natures, as abiding as our very life pulse, and as old as the race itself. William Watson wrote—

Lo, with the ancient  
Roots of man's nature  
Twines the eternal  
Passion of Song.

Ever Love fans it;  
Ever Life feeds it;  
Time cannot age it;  
Death cannot slay.

Deep in the world's heart  
Stand its foundations,  
Tangled with all things,  
Twin-made with all.

The control, we have seen, lies essentially in the limitations of the human organism: we are unable to express to the full, in outward motor activity, the adaptive responses of the organism to its environment. The emotions, being a condition of the organism as a whole, are thus under the necessity of being expressed in terms of these limitations: in terms of the law of supply and exhaustion in the nerve centers—in terms of rhythm. [Emotions—for that matter, all organic functionings—are expressed primarily in rhythmic patterns. Free and full expressions of emotion in natural rhythmic patterns would be pure poetry. But pure poetry per se is not necessarily art. Before poetry is art it must be acceptable to society, to the herd as it were, to social control. Art, let us remember, is not merely life but life reduced to acceptable pattern.<sup>1</sup> Such a pattern, however, is not mechanical and formalistic, as we shall see, but essentially organic.]

[The real poet is he who is eager, and even anxious, not

<sup>1</sup> For the esthetic aspect of form see Puffer's *Psychology of Beauty*, chapters II, III, IV, Santayana's *The Sense of Beauty*, chapter III, Winchester's *Some Principles of Literary Criticism*, chapter VI; Valentine's *Experimental Psychology of Beauty*, chapters IV, V, Sully's "Les Formes visuelles et le plaisir esthétique," *Revue Philosophique*, IX, Gordon's *Esthetics*, chapters I, VI, IX; Stratton's "Eye-Movements and the Esthetics of Visual Form," *Philosophische Studien*, Volume XX; Raymond's *The Essentials of Esthetics*, "The Genesis of Art Form and Poetry as a Representative Art," chapter XXVII, Rickert's *New Methods for the Study of Literature*, chapters V, VI, VII, Crane's *The Bases of Design*, "Line and Form", Fechner's *Vorschule des Aesthetik*, Croce's *Aesthetic*, Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, chapter XIV; R. P. Cowl's *The Theory of Poetry in England*, the chapter on "Imitation."



only to express himself but also to communicate himself. Thought and mood cannot be communicated until they are put into some sort of form, some kind of recognizable pattern. In all art there is this artist's consciousness: the artist wishes to secure the attention of his reader and to achieve an effect on him. "The art-impulse seems to be a desire to perpetuate one's own emotional experiences, to crystallize some exciting but too fleeting instant. If we have had a striking and significant moment, a strange sorrow or curious joy, we want it to be recorded. Now, the only real way to record a thing is to put it in such shape that it makes an impression both on ourself, and, especially, on others—makes a lasting or a revivable impression. Pleasing form is the best chance for such immortality."<sup>2</sup> Hirn holds that the art-impulse is a "desire for the objectification of emotion. . . . The work of art presents itself as the most effective means by which the individual is enabled to convey to wider and wider circles of sympathizers an emotional state similar to that by which he is himself dominated."<sup>3</sup> The conscious artist wishes to put his emotions and ideas in such a way that they will provoke, and even modify, the emotions and thoughts of others; indeed, sincere as he is, he is eager and anxious to establish his own problems and emotions as the really important ones. This desire results in his objectification of his ideas and emotions—in his putting his percepts and emotions into patterns. Art is but a device for heightening effects in a specific direction. Art is really creative impulse in pattern that can easily be recognized. Impulse and control, subject-matter and form, go hand in hand; they are

<sup>2</sup> Gordon's *Esthetics*, page 58.

<sup>3</sup> Hirn's *The Origins of Art*, page 6.

organically reciprocal and complementary to each other. Perfection comes when they are balanced and complementary. For his creative impulse, the poet, let us say, is born a poet; for his art, he must, as it were, go to school. His expression must be disciplined by the conditions governing that expression.

Impulse and control are somewhat opposed to each other. They are a sort of check and balance on one another. "The poet's impulse," says Prescott, "lies in the poet's desire, wishes, or aspirations. The desire of the individual poet, if it stood alone and untrammelled, would presumably all be satisfied.

Real are the dreams of Gods and smoothly pass  
Their pleasure in a long immortal dream.

[Keats's "Lamia," I, 127.]

But this gratification, the privilege of pure spirit, is denied to the poet. As a consequence of the mind's material embodiment, its desires meet physical obstacles, which often result in their denial."<sup>4</sup>

But such check and balance, such complementary and reciprocal relationship between impulse and form, is a law of all nature.\* The wind may start to blow freely across a field of ripening grain, but on coming into contact with the grain the erstwhile free movement of the wind is a bit retarded as the grain gradually yields to the wind's pressure for a moment and then, having yielded as far as the stiffness of the stalks of the grain will endure, it bends back to its original upright position, only, in a moment, to bend forward again—thus giving rise to wave-like effects in both wind and grain. The wave pattern is the result of complementary and

<sup>4</sup> Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, page 235.

reciprocal relations between impulse and control. A ray of light projected at an angle into a vessel of water, on passing into the water, is bent away from the straight line in which it approached the surface of the water. There is reciprocal adjustment in the water and in the direction of the light-wave. Always there is adjustment, always there is compromise in nature. Einstein has formulated it in his theory of relativity. Everything in the universe, organic or inorganic, when in a moving, fluid state, is subject to control; that is, all impulse to express manifests itself in conduct. "Conduct," Prescott continues, "is largely the result of a series of compromises or adjustments, more or less satisfactory, between impulse and authority. In dress, for example, we express our own tastes within the limits of fashion, and that is the best compromise which best expresses the individual character on the one hand and the social demand on the other. In manners we act as we like so far as our training will allow. In moral matters we follow the devices and desires of our own hearts, so far as moral obligations permit. In writing we give utterance to our own thought and feeling but in accordance with the tradition and usage in the prosaic and poetic styles. In all these cases—and every expression will be found to involve a similar adjustment—following the individual impulse is felt to be freedom and privilege, the social claim obligation and limitation. But as has always been recognized by civil relations, true liberty—at least the only liberty possible in this world of the individual and society—lies in freedom controlled by obligation."<sup>6</sup> Every good poem is thus a bit of conduct: it is a compromise between impulse and control. It manifests itself largely in

<sup>6</sup> Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, page 236.

poetic pattern, pattern in the poem as a whole, in stanza form, in meter, in rime, and in diction and phrase.

In the light of both the poet's and our own attitude toward impulse and control—especially toward control—do we align ourselves as romanticists or classicists. Romanticists ask for liberty and freedom; classicists ask for restraint and retrenchment. It is Carlyle's "Produce! In God's name, produce!", against Jonson's "*Sufflaminandus erat*" ["he ought to have had the brakes put on him"], said of Shakespeare. It is Coleridge's admiration for Shakespeare who was "nature's king" and "nature's king can do no wrong," against Dryden's statement of the Elizabethans that "their wit was not that of gentlemen" and that "it frequently descended to clenches." "Shakespeare wanted art," said Dryden. "To vent the feelings, to satisfy the heart and eyes, to set free boldly on all the roads of existence the pack of appetites and instincts, this was the craving which the manners of the time betrayed," wrote Taine of the age of Good Queen Bess. The age of Pope would "bind the present by the past." Pope, whose poetic impulse was not especially strong, did not advocate that poets "stand up to the chin in the Pierian flood." His school did not return to the classics; they made rule, authority, and restrictive guide of Homer, Virgil, Aristotle, and Horace.

Hear how learned Greece her useful rules indites,  
When to repress, and when indulge our flights.<sup>6</sup>

and

Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem,  
To copy nature is to copy them.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Horace, Vida, Boileau, Pope, Dryden utter such precepts. *The Making of Literature*, by Scott-James, is an excellent critical study of the subject.

Rousseau broke the restraining spell of authority and declared for individuality as opposed to type: "I am not made like anyone else I have ever known; yet if I am not better, at least I am different." Thus saying, he sounded the clarion for all revolters against authority for all time. At the very same time that Scaliger asserted, "Aristotle is our emperor, the perpetual dictator of all the fine arts," Pietro Aretino was insisting that "there is no rule except the whim of genius and no standard of judgment beyond individual taste." Of course, each of these extremes would be either devitalizing or demoralizing in poetic art. The real student of poetry is too wise to nail his banner to any one exclusively.

But, really, the principles of liberty and authority are seldom mutually exclusive in either the poet or in us; rather they are complementary. The sympathetic and astute critic, Walter Pater, said, "However much these two tendencies may be opposed by critics, or exaggerated by artists themselves, they are tendencies really at work at all times in art, molding it, with the balance sometimes a little on one side, sometimes a little on the other, generating, respectively, as the balance inclines on this side or that, two principles, two traditions, in art and in literature." Thus Shakespeare, Burns, Wordsworth, all essentially strong in creative impulse, do have some control; and Jonson, Dryden, Pope, all essentially strong in control, do have some creative impulse. We may have Marlowe's Faustus "leaping up to God" irrespective of how he leaps, or we may have Pope's assertion that "The proper study of mankind is man," still very definite as to his method of study and expression. The one is emotional zeal and the other is intellectual zeal. After thirty-seven years Wordsworth began "to feel the weight of too much liberty," and, ready for some degree of literary control, he

expressed his reaction in his sonnet "Nuns fret not." We may choose as we like and we do choose as we like: it may be the indifferently regular and sinuous English garden and its hedges or the mathematically regular garden at the Palace of Versailles; it may be the aspiring freedom of the Gothic cathedral or the formal regularity of a Greek temple; it may be Goethe, Shakespeare, and Burns, or Horace, Dryden, and Pope; we may want more life and fuller with Walt Whitman and his "barbaric yawp over the roof of the world," or we may rest somewhat more satisfied with our sum and substance and choose rather to give it compactness, directness, and more effective unity in terms, say, of Horace's formalized odes. The important thing is that we should know, and rest satisfied with this knowing, the difference between emotional zeal and intellectual zeal. The less important thing is that we should champion either extreme. Each, in its field, may be held supreme. It will avail us little if we insist that creative expression *must* be white or *must* be black, must be of *all* colors or must be of *no* color. Above all the greatest critical sin that we are heir to is arbitrarily to judge the one by the standards of the other, romantic products by classical standards, classical products by romantic standards. Above all, too, we must not complain of the mote in the romancer's or the classicist's eye when the beam may be in our own eye. The chances are that if we really understand the creative impulse of each, we shall find that both are present in our own natures and that we have not been quite aware of it.<sup>7</sup> And whether the creative poet be a romanticist or a classicist is not of greatest consequence: the

<sup>7</sup> William Allan Neilson's *The Essentials of Poetry*, chapters i, ii, iii, and iv, and Scott-James's *The Making of Literature* present a sane point of view as to romanticism and classicism; and for the classical and ro-

important thing is that he get his message—his emotion and his idea—over to his reader.

Pattern, in the poem as a whole, is organically essential to the poet, because he cannot well express himself in any other way; and it is, likewise, essential to the reader because it is largely through the pattern of the poem as a whole that he gets the poet's message. Emotion, mood, thought, cannot well be communicated until consciously they are put into some sort of easily recognizable form or pattern. Nature, contrary to popular belief, is highly architectonic; it is essentially in patterns. The poet, when he consciously tries to communicate, and the reader, when he reads the poem, both operate in terms of pattern. Our minds, Bergson reminded us long ago, are geometrized. We see life and recognize experiences "in terms of fixities, in the routing categories of mechanism and of logic." Our schemes, as a whole, of politics appear in the outline of a Bill of Rights, in a Declara-

mentary points of view in dramatic criticism, see Barrett Clark's *European Theories of the Drama*.

For the classical point of view see Horace's *Art of Poetry*, Vida's *Art of Poetry*, Boileau's *Art of Poetry*, Dryden's many prefaces and essays, and Samuel Daniel's *A Defence of Rime*. Horace, Vida, and Boileau may be had in Cook's edition.

For the romantic point of view see Sidney's *An Apologie for Poetry*, Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Woodberry's *The Study of Literature*, and Spingarn's *The New Criticism*.

For a statement of the spirit prompting revolt see Walt Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*, Spingarn's *The New Criticism* and H. L. Mencken's answer to it, "Criticism of Criticism of Criticism," in his *Prejudices*, First Series; Irwin Edman's "Patterns for the Free" in *The Bookman* for September 1925; Llewellyn's "Art, Form, and Expression" in *The Yale Review* for January 1922; also Weirick's *From Whitman to Sandburg in American Poetry*, and Lowes's *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*. Bowman's *Contemporary American Criticism* contains a good selection of articles pro and con.

tion of Independence, in a *Republic* (Plato); and these are structurally in organic and unified patterns. Our concepts of moral conduct appear in the form of a Code of Hammurabi (five centuries before Moses), a Ten Commandments, a Golden Rule, the Precepts of Gandhi, and these are in organic outline. Our theories of science appear in the form of Newton's *Principia*, Boyle's Law of Gases, Einstein's Theory of Relativity; and these are in organic and unified plan. Our concepts of poetry appear in treatises like Aristotle's *Poetics*, Horace's *Art of Poetry*, Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*; and these, too, are organized, structural unities. The authors of these could not well have expressed themselves otherwise than via such patterns. Certainly we could not get their large central and underlying themes in each creative work if we did not have the constructive and helpful aid of their organic outlines. The constructive principles of rhetoric are operative in poetry quite as much as in prose. When a poet, through an organic pattern, has expressed himself as he would have himself expressed, he is in the throes of happiness, for he can rest pretty certain that his very organic pattern will be the identical means whereby his reader, also, will understand.

Outlines! I plead for my brothers and sisters.

Do you see, O my brothers and sisters?

It is not chaos or death—it is *form, union, plan*—

It is eternal life—it is Happiness,

cried Walt Whitman, who had far more pattern in his poetry than we have realized. Form really is the impress of our organic conception of our material. Form in its intimate sense is the intrinsic, inevitable relation of cause and effect; in this sense, form is seen to be truly content also.



Now pattern is primarily the result of the organic nature of human creative functioning, but it is also intensified and made more effective by the poet's conscious attention to perfecting it. In free and unrestrained expression of the poetic impulse there is the element of organic pattern, but it is not quite the pattern of art. If, as we have seen in earlier chapters, emotional functioning is expressed in terms of large, sustained, rhythmical movement, and if, in the light of the law of exhaustion and supply, the tendency is to utter the individual expression in short, parallel, and repetitious line lengths, then we may expect that if a primitive poet—little concerned with communicating his theme to a public or a reader—should give himself over wholly to mere self-expression, he would, in all likelihood, continue indefinitely and without any concern for singleness of impression and unity of effect. This is exactly what might happen. If he did otherwise, we should have to consider it accidental and not conscious on his part. When the Osage Indian, devoutly believing that his body should be preserved in health and believing that his arms, legs, eyes, lips, and other bodily parts are necessary for the maintenance of the gift of life and its perpetuity, stood erect and with eyes uplifted to the sky above fervently prayed to the Great Spirit:

Of all things I own, my life is most sacred.  
My feet by which I stand are sacred.

Of all things I own, my life is most sacred.  
My legs by which I move from place to place are  
most sacred.

Of all things I own, my life is most sacred.  
My body by which I maintain the gift of life is  
most sacred.

Of all things I own, my life is most sacred.  
My head which contains my thoughts is most sacred.

Of all things I own, my life is most sacred.  
My lips by which I give forth my thoughts are  
most sacred.

. . . . .

in this semi-variable and repetitiously rhythmical manner until all the several parts of his anatomy had been thought of, there was no way of knowing when he would stop. The more zealous the petitioner, the more details of his body he would recall and the longer he would pray. Such a poem might well go far beyond our own powers to follow and to endure. That is, to give unity of effect to the whole, to give singleness of impression to the utterance, there must be a reining up somewhere of the endless procession. There must be a conscious awareness when a desired effect has been achieved and there must be some conscious planning how best to achieve that effect. Because of this frequently all but endless continuity, in primitive poetic utterance there are only sporadic specimens of enduring poetic art. Poetic art gradually came as the result of the more or less conscious artist in creative expression.

#### SIMPLE REPETITION

Since creative poetic functioning appears fundamentally in terms of rhythmical and parallel repetition—it cannot well be otherwise—we may expect to find simple repetition to be the chief aspect of organic and structural pattern in a poem as a whole. This is precisely what we find. Turn where we will, we find the theme, the singleness of effect, expressed by the poet and conveyed to the reader via the pattern of simple repetition. Walter de la Mare, wishing to convey to

us the emotion of light humor at sight of a lazy, tired body, wrote:

TIRED TIM

Poor tired Tim! It's sad for him.  
He lags the long bright morning through,  
Ever so tired of nothing to do;  
He moons and mopes the livelong day,  
Nothing to think about, nothing to say;  
Up to bed with his candle to creep,  
Too tired to yawn, too tired to sleep,  
Poor tired Tim! It's sad for him.

Here, in a poem of eight lines taken as a unit, the theme is repeated again and again in a complementary pattern of the simplest sort of repetition; at every step of the way, the theme is presented and held up before us again and again: each line, each combination of lines, and even parts of lines reiterate the dominant emotion and idea, and these, combined in simple iteration, give the plan of simplified repetition to the whole poem. Above all, the reiteration continues just so far and no farther—just far enough to get the proper artistic effect. The author of "*Resurgo*" likewise keeps before the reader the emotion of vigorous and courageous enthusiasm to achieve, by the structural pattern of simplified reiteration. And when he feels that he has repeated just about long enough, he stops. This rounding out, this halting at the opportune time is what makes "*Resurgo*" a bit of art:

RESURGO

Courage, awake with glorious dawn!  
Press on with faith when hope is gone!  
I come of a line that cannot die—  
Never a man of my blood can fail.

Against circumstance I must not rail,  
Success shall be my battle cry!  
Whate'er the crisis or the need,  
I must keep faith! I must succeed!

If we analyze the very familiar William Ernest Henley's "*Invictus*," we find that four times he has definitely presented to us the underlying theme in a pattern of reiterative outline, once in each stanza:

## INVICTUS

. . . . .  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

. . . . .  
My head is bloody but unbow'd.

. . . . .  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

. . . . .  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.

Henley is the artist: he has stopped his reiteration at just the right place. We feel that the poem is complete just when he breaks off. It need not be pointed out that the additional material in each stanza directly supports the repetition in each one and that each stanza is thus an organic unit. Tennyson's equally well-known "Crossing the Bar" employs a like pattern of repetition; at least three times, in the four stanzas

of the poem, the author lays before us his theme of his emotion of sustained serenity of faith in a future existence. Alan Seeger, in his now famous "I Have a Rendezvous with Death," in a pattern of reiteration, restates his theme (fidelity to his sense of high obligation), "I have a rendezvous with death," three times and then once more re-emphasizes it in the last two lines. Again the creative poet has reined up his reiteration of his theme at just the right moment.

And I to my pledged word am true,  
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

Surely in such poems as these there can be no difference of opinion as to the dominant emotion and the directive idea of each: the poets have structurally and organically outlined them for us and have held them up directly before our eyes to see. These outlines are the skeleton plans on which the subject-matter of the poems is hung. We may remind ourselves that all art is fundamentally good outline. Primitive art, very often, is simplified outline only.

Simplified repetition of the theme in the poem as a whole is, of course, the pattern employed in a very large percentage of English lyric poems. For that matter, in the lyric poems of the world, the poetic mind operates the same way in Patagonia as it does in Madagascar or in London and Paris. Robert Burns's love poems like "A Red, Red Rose," Tennyson's "Wages," and "The Charge of the Light Brigade," Browning's "*Prospice*," and "Rabbi Ben Ezra," Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," Arnold's "Dover Beach," Swinburne's "Hertha," Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," Poe's "Annabel Lee," Amy Lowell's "Patterns," and hundreds of others equally familiar—each has an outline in terms of the pattern of repe-

tion.<sup>8</sup> If we turn to the very last poem in the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, "*Dominus Illuminatio Mea*" by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, we have a most excellent example of a poem in the pattern of repetition. The emotion of serene and sustaining faith in God—much like the theme in Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar," but with different details of subject-matter—is restated in each stanza and is especially emphasized in the last line of each stanza—a line refrain:

## DOMINUS ILLUMINATIO MEA

In the hour of death, after this life's whim,  
When the heart beats low, and the eyes grow dim,  
And pain has exhausted every limb—  
The lover of the Lord shall trust in Him.

When the will has forgotten the lifelong aim,  
And the mind can only disgrace its fame,  
And a man is uncertain of his own name—  
The power of the Lord shall fill this frame.

When the last sigh is heaved, and the last tear shed,  
And the coffin is waiting beside the bed,  
And the widow and child forsake the dead—  
The angel of the Lord shall lift this head.

For even the purest delight may pall,  
And power must fail, and the pride must fall,  
And the love of the dearest friends grow small—  
But the glory of the Lord is all in all.

<sup>8</sup> For poems expressed in terms of the pattern of simple repetition see the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, No. 8, 9, 20, 23, 34, 35, 41, 47, 53, 77, 98, 99, 111, 121, 125, 126, 140, 178, 204, 206, 217, 240, 289, 290, 335, 437, 497, 499, 503, 510, 513, 529, 556, 567, 608, 610, 654, 659, 668, 696, 705, 759, 760, 767, 780, 781, 784, 786, 798, 816, 824, 842, 847, 848, 867, 869, 874, and 883.

And the delicate "The Rosary," by Robert Cameron Rogers, is also expressed in the simplified pattern of reiteration. The theme of exalted devotion stands out in simple skeleton outline—I, II, III. We catch its spirit with its directive idea because the artist put it into such organic pattern that we cannot fail to get it. This is poetic art of a high order.

#### THE ROSARY

The hours I spent with thee, dear heart,  
Are as a string of pearls to me;  
I count them over, every one apart,  
My rosary.

Each hour a pearl, each pearl a prayer,  
To still a heart in absence wrung;  
I tell each bead unto the end—and there  
A cross is hung.

Oh, memories that bless—and burn!  
Oh, barren gain—and bitter loss!  
I kiss each bead, and strive at last to learn  
To kiss the cross,  
Sweetheart,  
To kiss the cross.

It is obvious that poetic expression—especially of a lyrical kind—is most effective when it is not allowed to overrun itself, when it is reined up and brought to a definite and emphatic close while the zeal of creative impulse is still hot. It is amazing how many of our English lyrics, and lyrics in other literatures as well, exemplify this artistic brevity. There is more than a grain of truth in Poe's dictum that "a long poem is a contradiction in terms." The real artist,

the conscious artist, knows when his effect has been secured; and, knowing when it has been secured, stops!

Now this pattern of repetition sometimes manifests itself in several ways. Sometimes (*a*) the same subject is taken from several angles and strung on the same thread, as in the instance of Vachel Lindsay's "The Congo," in Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott," and in Mary F. Wildman's "Poplars," which is:

## POPLARS

Poplars  
In summer  
Whispering of cool green shade  
To the silent meeting-house.

Poplars  
In autumn  
And floods of yellow sunshine through the trees.  
Bright leaves that trickle through the boughs, and drop  
Into a shimmering pool of molten gold,  
That comes to lap about the old tree's feet,  
Then ripples into rest.

Poplars  
In winter  
Grey ghosts upon the pale green twilight sky;  
In their white fingers strange sweet fragrances,  
Haunted with memories of forgotten dreams.

Sometimes the pattern occurs as (*b*) a simple listing of characteristics, as in Sir Henry Wotton's "The Character of a Happy Life," in Henry Howard's "The Means to Attain a Happy Life," and in Keats's "Hymn to the Spirit of Nature." Sometimes it appears as but little more than (*c*) a



catalogue of materials, as in Whitman's "There Was a Child Went Forth" or in Richard Crawshaw's "Wishes to His Supposed Mistress." More often, however, this pattern occurs in terms of (*d*) a listing of a series followed by an interpretation or application at the close, as in Tennyson's "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," in Witter Bynner's "A Grace before Poems" (*Grenstone Poems*), in Hogg's "A Boy's Song," in Kipling's "Tommy," and in Herrick's "The Poetry of Dress," which runs:

THE POETRY OF DRESS

A sweet disorder in the dress  
 Kindles in clothes a wantonness;  
 A lawn about the shoulders thrown  
 Into a fine distraction—  
 An erring lace, which here and there  
 Entralls the crimson stomacher—  
 A cuff neglectful, and thereby  
 Ribbands to flow confusedly—  
 A winning wave, deserving note,  
 In the tempestuous petticoat—  
 A careless shoestring, in whose tie  
 I see a wild civility,  
 Do more bewitch me, than when art  
 Is too precise in every part.

Again it appears in the form of (*e*) a series of questions followed by an answer<sup>9</sup> as in George Wither's "The Lover's Resolution," or in Sir Thomas Wyatt's "The Appeal." The latter:

<sup>9</sup> See also in Moulton's *The Modern Reader's Bible*: Psalm 15, "Lord, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?" and Psalm 24, "Who is the King of Glory?" See the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Nos. 24, 35, 54, 88, 90, 111, 123, 177, 178, 201, 204, 237, 254, 327, 449, 667, 760, 783.

## THE APPEAL

And wilt thou leave me thus?  
Say nay, say nay, for shame!  
—To save thee from the blame.  
Of all my grief and grame.  
And wilt thou leave me thus?  
Say nay! say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,  
That hath loved thee so long  
In wealth and woe among  
And is thy heart so strong  
As for to leave me thus?  
Say nay! say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,  
That hath given thee my heart  
Never for to depart  
Neither for pain nor smart.  
And wilt thou leave me thus?  
Say nay! say nay!

. . . . .

Always these poems carry their plan of reiteration just so far and no farther. They do not overrun their opportune time limit as do many of our primitive lyrics. There is something of conscious craftsmanship in them.

Should we turn our attention to literatures other than English, we shall find that they, too, employ the organic pattern of repetition in a large number of their poems. The old Hebrew poem (Isaiah 13:19-22) on the fall of ancient and sinful Babylon is in such outline:

## THE FALL OF BABYLON

And Babylon

The glory of kingdoms,  
The beauty of the Chaldeans' pride  
Shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

It shall never be inhabited,  
Neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation,  
Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there;  
Neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there.

But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there;  
And their houses shall be full of doleful creatures,  
And ostriches shall dwell there,  
And satyrs shall dance there.

And wolves shall cry in their castles,  
And jackals in the pleasant palaces:  
And her time is near to come,  
And her days shall not be prolonged.<sup>10</sup>

The poetry of China is essentially lyric—there is no great epic—from the most ancient to the most recent times. In their celebrated *Book of Odes*—305 poems; all of which were composed before the beginning of the sixth century B.C.—is the very tender poem, "The Great Ho River." It is typically short; Chinese poetry seems, indeed, to exemplify Poe's contention that, directly speaking, there is no

<sup>10</sup> See also "Sonnet on Wisdom," Proverbs 4 : 1-9, "Sonnet on Wine and Woe," Proverbs 23 : 29-35; "Sonnet on the Sower of Discord," Proverbs 6 : 12-18, "Doom of Babylon," Isaiah 13 : 19-28, Psalms 1, 19, 23, 24, 28, 85, 146; "The Coming of Evil Days," Ecclesiastes 12 : 1-7, "The Curse," Job 3 : 1-25, all in their literary form in Moulton's *The Modern Reader's Bible*.

such thing as a long poem. The ideal length of the art lyric is twelve lines, and this was the limit set to candidates at the great public examinations held until recently, the Chinese maintaining that if a poet cannot say within such compass what he has to say it may well be left unsaid.<sup>11</sup> The theme is the emotion of a mother's love for her son, the Lord of Sung, who is far away. The pattern is a series of repeated questions and their answers by rhetorical contraries, quite after the established method of Chinese poetry.

## THE GREAT HO RIVER

Who says the Ho is wide?  
Why one little reed can bridge it.

Who says that Sung is far?  
I stand on tiptoe and see it.

Who says the Ho is wide?  
Why the smallest boat can enter.

Who says that Sung is far?  
It takes not a morning to reach it.

From the Japanese—like the Chinese, their poetry is almost wholly lyric, with practically no epic—by Yang Kuei-fei, we have the famous poem, "Dancing," in which the supreme beauty of the imperial concubine of the emperor is suggested in three most delicate pictures of original Japanese conception. So subtle and so ethereal is this poem in its suggestion that we fear to touch the delicate fabric. Three fleeting gossamers of the mind strung on one delicate thread; a

<sup>11</sup> Gayley and Kurtz's *Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism*, page 368.

pattern of repetition that is unified and single in its artistic effect:

## DANCING

(*The "White Poplar," Imperial Concubine of  
the Emperor Ming Huang*)

Wide sleeves sway.  
Scents,  
Sweet scents,  
Incessantly coming.

It is red lilies,  
Lotus lilies,  
Floating up,  
And up,  
Out of autumn mist.

Thin clouds,  
Puffed,  
Fluttered,  
Blown on a rippling wind  
Through a mountain pass.

Young willow shoots  
Touching,  
Brushing,  
The water  
Of the garden pool.

From both the Chinese and the Japanese lyrics, we may gain many a lesson in brevity and in singleness of impression. Many of their poems are veritable masterpieces in the pattern of repetition traced in terms brief but most subtle in their effect.

## ENVELOPE FIGURE

A somewhat more emphatic form of the pattern of repetition is the pattern of envelope figure. When the old Hebrew bard cried out his praises to Jehovah

Give unto the Lord, O ye Mighty, give unto the  
Lord glory and strength.  
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;  
Worship the Lord in beauty of Holiness,

he employed, no doubt unconsciously on his part, what he could not escape, organic form: four times, in somewhat repetitious parallel grouping, he repeated his emotion and directive idea. And when the old Hebrew psalmist wrote the Eighth Psalm, he placed like alongside like in four groups of rhythmical and somewhat parallel utterances, and then inclosed the four groups inside two identical refrains, one of which he uses at the beginning of his poem and the other at its close. This is the slightly more complex envelope figure, but, in reality, it is only an intensive modification of the pattern of simple repetition discussed above.

## MAN THE VICEROY OF GOD

O LORD, our Lord,  
How excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens,  
Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou established strength,  
That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

What is man, that thou art mindful of him?  
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?

For thou hast made him but little lower than God,  
And crownest him with glory and honour.  
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy  
hands;

All sheep and oxen,  
Yea, and the beasts of the field;  
The fowl of the air, and fish of the sea,  
Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Lord,  
How excellent is thy name in all the earth!<sup>12</sup>

Out of the far North, the arctic explorer, Knud Rasmussen, reports that among the Esquimaux, when sometimes the hunting fails in a given season, those single-minded folk have their wizard appeal to the Mistress of the Sea to persuade her to release, for food to appease their hunger, some of the creatures of the deep that she is holding back. One of the songs that they sing runs—

We stretch forth our hands  
To lift thee up.  
We are without food,  
Without fruits of our hunting.  
Come up then from below,  
From the hollow place  
Force a way through.

<sup>12</sup> See also Twenty-third Psalm, "Sonnet on Wisdom," Proverbs  
3 11-19, "Lamentation of David over Jonathan and Saul," II Samuel  
1 19-27.

We are without food,  
And here we lie down  
We stretch forth our hands,  
To lift thee up.<sup>18</sup>

Primitive repetitious parallelism obtains in almost every line; but the more significant thing is that the theme, the emotion of prayerful supplication, is unusually emphasized by the pattern of envelope figure.

The chief function of the envelope part of the envelope pattern is that it is a very effective device for emphasizing the theme of a poem. Rhetorically speaking, the most emphatic places in a bit of composition are first and last. The fact that the two parts of the envelope figure do come first and last lends emphasis to their content. Moreover, such a pattern has an additional source of advantage; in its printed form on the page, the enveloping part of the pattern is placed somewhat apart from the "filler" part of the poem, again emphasizing the subject-matter of the first and last lines of the poetic product. Examination of a large number of poems employing this pattern shows that in practically every instance the theme of the poem is expressed in the first lines of the envelope figure. To state the theme at the outset and to return to it by definite repetition at the close is to resort to the most effective means of placing it before the reader. It is as if one, starting from a given point of vantage and going in a circle, would come right back to the identical point of emphasis. Any poem employing the envelope figure has a distinct advantage in its device for getting its message to the reader. We may rest assured, too, that the poet who employs this device is pretty certain in his own

<sup>18</sup> Printed in the *Literary Digest*, April 30, 1927.



mind just what message he wishes to communicate to us. Keats, wishing to convey to us his spirit of delight at memories of the Mermaid Tavern—shades of Ben Jonson and Shakespeare!—via the envelope pattern, impresses us in no uncertain way:

THE MERMAID TAVERN

Souls of Poets dead and gone,  
What Elysium have ye known,  
Happy field or mossy cavern,  
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

Have ye tippled drink more fine  
Than mine host's Canary wine?  
Or are fruits of Paradise  
Sweeter than those dainty pies  
Of venison? O generous food!  
Drest as though bold Robin Hood  
Would, with his Maid Marian,  
Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day  
Mine host's signboard flew away  
Nobody knew whither, till  
An astrologer's old quill  
To a sheepskin gave the story—  
Said he saw you in your glory  
Underneath a new-old Sign  
Sipping beverage divine,  
And pledging with contented smack  
The Mermaid in the Zodiac!

Souls of Poets dead and gone,  
What Elysium have ye known—  
Happy field or mossy cavern—  
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

Keats's "*La belle dame sans merci*" and "Bards of Passion and of Mirth," and Blake's "The Tiger" also employ the envelope pattern to get their effects to us. In the envelope part of "*La belle dame sans merci*," however, there is a question and answer. Thus the author uses a sort of double pattern for purposes of emphasis. Thomas Hood's "Time of Roses," Burns's "Afton Water" and "Farewell to Nancy," Amy Lowell's "Sea Shell," Thomas Augustin Daly's "Da Leetla Boy" (pathetic to the last degree), Richard Hovey's "At the Crossroads" (sturdy and optimistic), Carl Sandburg's "Chicago" (honest and sturdy pride), likewise communicate their themes to us most effectively via the envelope pattern. John Masefield, melancholy and vigorous Anglo-Saxon that he is, carries his message straight to our hearts in the opening couplet repeated as the closing couplet of his "The Seekers":

Friends and loves we have none, nor wealth nor blest abode,  
But the hope, the burning hope, and the road, the lonely road.

If we will return but for a moment and re-read Walter de la Mare's "Tired Tim" (above, page 168), we shall see, at first glance, that it, too, employs the envelope pattern, though perhaps we did not detect it when we first read it. John Galsworthy has said that the Englishman commits many small errors but perpetrates really few blunders. Above all he is a man who, with all his reserve and common sense, loves his hearth-fire, his home, and even the mist and the rain of his native heath. He looks upon life with some degree of quiet enjoyment. Frances Shaw, again via the effectiveness of the envelope pattern, has impressed this theme upon her reader in a way that we do not soon forget:

## WHO LOVES THE RAIN

Who loves the rain  
And loves his home,  
And looks on life with quiet eyes,  
    Him will I follow through the storm;  
    And at his hearth-fire keep me warm;  
    Nor hell nor heaven shall that soul surprise,  
Who loves the rain,  
Who loves his home,  
And looks on life with quiet eyes.

This poem is one beautiful, sustained, rhythmic poetic impulse; and, beginning at a point of vantage, we start out, travel in a circle, and return again to the original point—the theme of the poem.<sup>14</sup>

## COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

Not infrequently the pattern of repetition assumes the form of more or less direct comparison or that of contrast and contraries. A most effective means of emphasis is that of presenting a less familiar thing as being like something more familiar—likeness, or similarity, being the basis of comparison. Thus Joseph Campbell delicately likens the quiet spirit of an old woman to three somewhat familiar concrete things.

## THE OLD WOMAN

As a white candle  
In a holy place,  
So is the beauty  
Of an aged face.

<sup>14</sup> For other illustrations of the envelope pattern, see the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Nos. 30, 31, 38, 59, 166, 235, 283, 425, 489, 499, 506, 513, 543, 546, 584, 596, 631, 651, 656, 659, 668, 769, 774, 817, 825, 871, and 880.

As the spent radiance  
Of the winter sun,  
So is a woman  
With her travail done,

Her brood gone from her,  
And her thoughts as still  
As the waters  
Under a ruined mill.

However, a still more effective means to emphasis is that of presenting one thing as being unlike something else—the method of dissimilarity, or of contrast and contraries. Thus Shakespeare (?) emphasizes the buoyant spirit of love and youth by placing it in a balanced contrast to that of old age. Here the pattern of repetition is intensified by being placed in a pattern of opposites:

CRABBED AGE AND YOUTH

Crabbed Age and Youth  
Cannot live together  
Youth is full of pleasance,  
Age is full of care,  
Youth like summer morn,  
Age like winter weather;  
Youth like summer brave,  
Age like winter bare.  
Youth is full of sport,  
Age's breath is short,  
Youth is nimble, Age is lame;  
Youth is hot and bold,  
Age is weak and cold:  
Youth is wild, and Age is tame.  
Age, I do abhor thee;

Youth, I do adore thee;  
O, my Love, my Love is young!  
Age, I do defy thee:  
O, sweet shepherd, hie thee!  
For methinks thou stay'st too long.

Emerson's "Fable," Lovelace's "To Lucasta, Going to the Wars," Masefield's "Tomorrow," many poems in Masters' *The Spoon River Anthology*, Walt Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!", Browning's "My Star," Tennyson's "The Two Voices" and "The Lotos-Eaters," Robert Bridges' "Winter Nightfall," Burns's "Highland Mary" and "Duncan Gray," are expressed in patterns of contrast and contraries.<sup>18</sup>

#### CLIMAX

And finally the conscious artist, though it may seldom result naturally in creative poetic utterance, will always make the most of the rhetorical principle of climax. A nerve that is being stimulated to action while fresh needs little stimulus to arouse it to response, but, after a period of functioning, will require a much stronger stimulus to provoke it to response. James has told us that, in any instance, our power of attention does not, unless we use our volition, obtain for long. Accordingly, it is but in deference to the nature of our physiological and psychological functioning that a poet

<sup>18</sup> For examples of poems in pattern of contrast, see the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Nos. 56, 60, 98, 99, 136, 186, 213, 292, 390, 430, 444, 497, 501, 513, 532, 546, 599, 601, 602, 658, 666, 702, 739, 743, 755, 768, 805, 823, 845, 860, 866, and 878.

For example of poems in pattern of contraries, see *ibid.*, Nos. 55, 60, 98, 99, 425, 444, 546, 599, 678, and 845.

For examples of *débat* pattern see *ibid.*, Nos. 25, 29, 57, 73, 90, and 112.

employs the pattern of climax in his finished product—step by step a stronger stimulus, and the very strongest at the last. The chances are that if there is not somewhat of conscious craftsmanship the creative mind will not employ climax: this is evidenced by the fact that purely primitive poetry seldom shows any kind of tendency to climax; on the contrary, more often, the impulse to utter, after a period, grows weaker and weaker. Natural and organic pattern must thus be aided and intensified by consciously planned artificial pattern. This is what makes art. This is what we mean when we say that art is not merely life but life reduced to acceptable pattern. Nearly every poem listed or quoted above employs the pattern of organic climax. We need but to re-read Shelley's immortal "To a Skylark," or Swinburne's "Hertha," or Poe's "The Raven," or Tennyson's "Ulysses," or Burns's "Bannockburn," or Dryden's "Alexander's Feast," or Wyatt's "Forget Not Yet," or Herrick's "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time," or a hundred others one might easily list from every language in the world,<sup>16</sup> to have proof that the pattern of climax in poetic form is universally employed.

Of course, it is not always in any given poem that one type of pattern and one only is employed. Since practically every pattern is but something of a modification of the natural and organic pattern of simplified repetition—toned up, of course, by the artistic consciousness—we should expect to find perhaps two or three or even several patterns organically interlinked in a given poetic product. In any instance, the whole will be the more effective if all is given

<sup>16</sup> For poems employing the pattern of climax, see the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Nos. 34, 72, 123, 177, 224, 257, 266, 335, 348, 503, 511, 593, 608, 610, 669, 718, 842, 849, 853, 855, and 883.

direction and added emphasis by a judicious use of the rhetorical principle of climax. In George Wither's "The Lover's Resolution" we have an excellent example of such combination. In this poem we have the basic (*a*) pattern of repetition. But this basic pattern is also in the form of almost (*b*) a catalogue parallelism of questions and answers. It appears also in the form of (*c*) contrast and contraries. Above all, the poem is given specific direction and interpretative intensity by a most effective use of (*d*) climax.

#### THE LOVER'S RESOLUTION

Shall I, wasting in despair,  
Die because a woman's fair?  
Or make pale my cheeks with care  
'Cause another's rosy are?  
Be she fairer than the day,  
Or the flow'ry meads in May,  
If she think not well of me,  
What care I how fair she be?

Shall my silly heart be pined  
'Cause I see a woman kind?  
Or a well disposed nature  
Joined with a lovely feature?  
Be she meeker, kinder, than  
Turtle-dove or pelican,  
If she be not so to me  
What care I how kind she be?

Shall a woman's virtues move  
Me to perish for her love?  
Or her well-deservings known  
Make me quite forget my own?

Be she with that goodness blest  
Which may merit name of Best,  
If she be not such to me,  
What care I how good she be?

'Cause her fortune seems too high,  
Shall I play the fool and die?  
She that bears a noble mind,  
If not outward helps she find,  
Thinks what with them he would do  
That without them dares her woo;  
And unless that mind I see,  
What care I how great she be?

Great, or good, or kind, or fair,  
I will ne'er the more despair;  
If she love me, this believe,  
I will die ere she shall grieve;  
If she slight me when I woo,  
I can scorn and let her go,  
For if she be not for me,  
What care I for whom she be?

We need scarcely add that the theme and the pattern of "The Lover's Resolution" are strikingly made manifest via the refrain that is used throughout the poem. The use of a refrain as a structural element in English poetry is a highly important factor. To the refrain we must give special attention.

#### THE REFRAIN IN ENGLISH POETRY

Creative poetic utterance, in its elemental form, is essentially *song*—song pure and undefiled. All creative utterance is essentially lyrical. "All art is lyrical—the *Divine Comedy*,



*King Lear*, Rodin's 'Thinker,' the Parthenon, a Corot landscape, a Bach fugue, or Isadora Duncan's dancing, as much as the songs of Heine or Shelley."<sup>17</sup> Students of poetry are more and more agreed that the narrative material, as it appears in our lyrical expression and especially in our ballads (held by some to be the very earliest form of our poetry), is really a somewhat later addition to the earlier purely lyrical utterance of the race.<sup>18</sup> Long before the human race had developed any form of articulated and inflected language, it was possessed already of the instinct to express, the impulse to utter, the urge to speak forth. The very earliest emotions of joy and sorrow, of victory and defeat, of freedom and restraint, of pleasantness and unpleasantness—the entire gamut of emotions that human flesh is heir to—were expressed in outward gesture or in vocal utterance. If expressed via the human voice, before a well-developed and well-articulated language was his, primitive man expressed himself in terms of a series of more or less meaningless vocables whose sound quality was most appropriate to the nature of his emotion. Functioning in terms of one emotion dominating, he reiterated this dominant emotion

<sup>17</sup> Spingarn's *The New Criticism*.

<sup>18</sup> See the comprehensive and scholarly volume, *Poetic Origins and the Ballad*, by Louise Pound. Chapters 1-v contain evidence to support the following: (1) earliest poems were pure refrains; (2) narrative material is a later addition to the lyric, especially in the instance of the ballad, (3) authorship has been individual first and communal second, (4) ballads are not the earliest form of poetry, etc.

See the comprehensive and scholarly volume, *The Beginnings of Poetry*, by Gummere, which supports the somewhat opposing point of view. See also Walter Morris Hart's "Ballad and Epic" in *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*; and J. H. Boynton's "Studies in the English Ballad Refrain, with a Collection of Ballad and Early Song Refrains" (1897, unpublished Harvard Doctorate thesis).

again and again in terms of the same series of meaningless vocables. In a word, the basis of all primitive poetic utterance is really a refrain. Just how long our early racial forefathers continued to express their emotional values primarily in pure refrains, we have little way of knowing. We do know, however, that such early written records as we have of our earliest poetry are strikingly characterized by the overwhelming presence of refrains. The refrain was the nucleus, the identity, of primitive man's emotional experience. It was to these refrains that later, perhaps, he added such concrete narrative material as may naturally have associated or attached itself to the emotional experience as represented and expressed in that refrain.

Clearly a dominant emotional theme is the basis of every lyrical poem, whether that poem be primitive or modern. The repetition of that dominant emotional value—like placed alongside like in parallel repetition—is likewise characteristic of all good lyrical utterances, whether primitive or contemporary. And since the instinctive tendency is to express a given emotion in terms of a repeated formula, such formula or refrain is, thus, elemental in all lyrical utterance whether it be that of the dawn of man or that of most recent times. A refrain, then, is not infrequently the very backbone, the essence, the *leit-motif*, the basic outline of a given poetic product. While we cannot have any copies of purely primitive oral poetry, we may safely assume that it must have been largely, if not all, refrain. Remnants of refrains appear in such early records as we are fortunate enough to possess, thanks to our investigators in anthropology, folk-lore, and ethnology. In our early English lyrics the evidence of refrain remnants is rather definite. The "Sing, Cuckoo!" repeated in our "Cuckoo Song" (ca. 1250), "Blow

Northern Wynd!" in a poem of the same name, "Falero, lero, loo!" in George Wither's "I Loved a Lass," the "Cuckoo!", "To-whit! To-who!", "Lulla, lulla, lullaby," "Come hither, come hither, come hither," "Heigh ho! sing, heigh ho!", "With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino" in Shakespeare's several lyrics, also "Adieu Love, adieu Love, untrue Love," "Ba-low, la-low!" and many, many more, are examples of such refrains. From the Latin hymns, there were carried over from the Continent into the early English lyrics many refrains in Latin (macaronic verse) which the multitude probably could not understand literally but which served, nevertheless, as an agency for uttering their emotions. "Deo Gracias," "Et nobis Puer natus est," "Mane nobiscum, Domine," "Quia amore langueo," "Timor mortis conturbat me," "Parce michi domine" are examples in point.

Any examination of an anthology of lyrics—the earlier lyrics in particular—will reveal the presence of the refrain tendency. In the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, out of more than eight hundred lyrics, considerably more than two hundred have definite refrains, and all have repetition, in one form or another, of the dominant emotion and idea. Naturally the pure refrain obtains more frequently in the earlier lyrics than in the later ones: thus in the first one hundred poems in the *Oxford Book of English Verse* more than forty have specific refrains; in the last one hundred poems in that volume, more than fifteen have specific refrains. Out of one hundred and thirty-five poems in Carleton Brown's *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century*, forty, or thirty per cent, have well-defined refrains, some of which are the Latin refrains from the many Latin hymns of the Middle Ages. If, in addition to the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, we examine other anthologies—say, Palgrave's

*The Golden Treasury*, the *Oxford Book of French Verse*, the *Oxford Book of German Verse*, Gay's *The Collage Book of Verse*, Harper's *Anthology of Verse*, etc.—we shall find further evidence of the ever present refrain. Of the more than twelve hundred and fifty several versions of our ballads, Professor Gummere found that more than three hundred have actual refrains. "The function of the refrain," says Woodberry,<sup>19</sup> "is precisely to secure the reverberation of one chord of the mood continuously rising up and dying, and rising again and dying away, so that the emotion rather than any particular image of the emotion shall fill the mind." We do not need to remind ourselves that the recurrence of the refrain, "Tears, idle tears," in the lyric of that name in Tennyson's *The Princess* serves to do this very thing. Nor do we need to remind ourselves that this refrain is really a statement of the theme (dominant emotion) of the poem. Indeed the refrain<sup>20</sup> is the poem: all else is attached to this one dominant note.

Not only from literature but also out of our everyday experience, from childhood to our latest day, is there evidence a-plenty of the presence of the refrain tendency in

<sup>19</sup> *The Appreciation of Poetry*, page 45

<sup>20</sup> For further study of the appearance and function of the refrain, see Poe's *The Philosophy of Composition* (his account of the refrain, "Nevermore," in "The Raven"), Louise Pound's *Poetic Origins and the Ballad*, chapters 11, 14, Jeanroy's *Les Origines de la poésie en France au moyen âge*, Redier's "*Les plus anciennes danses françaises*" in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and J. H. Boynton's "Studies in the English Ballad Refrain, with a Collection of Ballad and Early Song Refrains" (1897, unpublished Harvard Doctorate thesis). Further bibliographies may be had in these publications.

There is need of an exhaustive study of the refrain in English verse such as we have of the refrain in French verse in G. Thureau's *Der Refrain in der französischen Chanson*, Berlin, 1901.

our emotional functioning. We need but to return to well-known "game-songs" or "play-songs," to nursery lullaby songs, to religious songs, and to marching songs for refrains. These products are most nearly in juxtaposition to our earliest unrecorded lyrical utterance. A given emotion is expressed in some one line, and instantly that line becomes the nucleus for repetitions and additions—even of narrative materials. Whatever be the ultimate content and form of the resulting poem, the original refrain continues to be its keynote. Thus the earliest songs have come down to us primarily in repetitious refrain form; and it is because of these refrains that we are enabled so easily to remember them. As children we played and sang in repetitious refrains—as grown-ups we continue, at times, to sing and play them—"Lost your partner, what 'll you do" in *Skip to My Lou*; "Hi, Jim along, Jim along, Josie" in *Jim Along, Joe*; "Up and down the center we go" in *Chase the Squirrel*; "We 'll go round and circle left" in *Captain Jinks*; and "Sent my brown jug down in town" in *Little Brown Jug*. It is these refrains that are the keynotes of these poems. In pagan Old France, the maidens and women danced and sang early songs (carols) in the springtime on festal occasions. Many of these tunes and refrains were carried over into England, where they materially influenced the early English lyric.<sup>21</sup> The medieval religious carols<sup>22</sup>—Christian motifs and materials set to

<sup>21</sup> See Reed's *English Lyrical Poetry*, chapter ii, Schelling's *The English Lyric*, chapter ii, Rhys's *Lyrical Poetry*, chapters iv-vii. See also Jeanroy's *Les Origines de la poésie lyrique en France au moyen âge*.

<sup>22</sup> See Edith Rickert's *Ancient English Christmas Carols* (1925); Jesse L. Weston's *Old English Carols* (1911); Wright's *Songs and Carols* (1868); Gaston Paris' *La Poésie du moyen âge*; Cledat's *La Poésie lyrique et satirique en France au moyen âge*, Baldwin's *English Medieval Litera-*

pagan carol tunes—are characterized by repetitions and parallel refrains. The carol of the six rose branches, for illustration, is built around the refrain,

All of a rose, a lovely rose,  
All of a rose, I sing a song.

The refrain, the “burden” as Elizabethans called it, is an ever present and all-important tendency in poetic utterance. Perhaps primitive man was not so badly off, after all, even if he had to express his poetic emotions primarily in repetitious refrains.

Thus it is that “often single lines and phrases seem to have the value of a whole poem,” asserted the late Professor Ker<sup>23</sup> of Oxford. “The refrain, then, is not a poetic embellishment; it is a kind of nucleus, it determines the structure. The tale is built around the refrain,” declares Professor Baldwin.<sup>24</sup> The presence of a refrain in a poem, ancient or modern, is no accident. Nor is its presence a mannerism. In reading a poem in which there is a refrain, not infrequently we treat it lightly or even pass over it entirely when, in fact, the refrain is the meat of the poem. It is very often the structural backbone on which the other material is hung. “The refrain is important, and holds it [the medieval lyric] together; but it is not narrative. . . . When we examine genuine dance songs, it becomes clear that their most important element is the repetitional element. The texts of them [the medieval lyrics] shift more than do

ture, *The Hill MS* (carols), edited by Dyboski, Early English Text Society, 101, 7, “Balliol MS,” 354, “Sloane MS,” 2593, and “Vernon MS,” Part I.

<sup>23</sup> *The Art of Poetry*, page 25.

<sup>24</sup> *English Medieval Literature*, page 237.

the ballad texts, for there is no story to hold them together; but the repeated element, or the refrain, is stable."<sup>28</sup> Thus the stable element in the old Scotch melodies and songs, which everybody in Scotland knew by heart and for which Robert Burns composed more than three hundred new lyrics, was a repeated refrain. In his *Scrap Book*, Burns has told us how he wrote at least one of his poems to one of these Scotch repetitious tunes:

'T was at the same time I set about to composing an air in an old Scotch style. . . . I am not musical scholar enough to prick down my tune properly, so it can never see the light, and perhaps 't is no great matter; but the following were the verses I composed to suit it:

"O raging fortune's withering blast  
Has laid my leaf full low! O  
O raging fortune's withering blast  
Has laid my leaf full low! O

"My stem was fair, my bud was green,  
My blossom sweet did blow, O  
The dew felt fresh, the sun rose mild,  
And made my branches grow, O

"But luckless fortune's northern storms  
Laid a' my blossoms low, O  
But luckless fortune's northern storms  
Laid a' my blossoms low, O."

The tune consisted of three parts, so that the above verses just went through the whole air.

The complementary resultant refrain, "Has laid my leaf full low! O," in slightly variant forms, reveals itself to be the actual theme of the poem. Likewise, this reiterated re-

<sup>28</sup> Louise Pound's *Poetic Origins and the Ballad*, pages 50, 65.

frain is the structural backbone, the organic pattern, of the poem. This repeated refrain is identical, in structural value, with similar repetitions of themes, etc., in the poems discussed in the foregoing part of this chapter. It is evident that one of the most important factors in the organic pattern of a poem is the refrain.

Examination of the structural pattern of English poetic utterance reveals the interesting fact that the refrain, in varied combinations and in varied relationships to the "narrative" material of a poem, is frequently used as the organic outline of a poem. Indeed, until we make such examination, we shall be quite unaware just how often this is the case. Sometimes a single-line refrain repeated several times throughout a given poem—usually (*a*) at the beginning or (*b*) at the end of each stanza, sometimes repeated (*c*) at both the beginning and the end, and once in a while repeated not at the beginning and end but (*d*) within the poem—provides such a supporting structure. Burns's "Highland Mary," with its tenderly pathetic refrain (a bit variant in phrasing),

O' my sweet Highland Mary

repeated at the close of each of the four stanzas, and the anonymous "There Is a Lady Sweet and Kind,"<sup>26</sup> with its refrain of constancy,

And yet I 'll love her till I die

reiterated at the close of each of three stanzas, are examples of the prevailing type of one-line-refrain pattern. Burns's "John Anderson, My Jo" with its refrain of admiring devotion,

John Anderson, my jo

<sup>26</sup> *Oxford Book of English Verse*, No. 70.



repeated at the beginning and at the end of each of two stanzas of which the poem is composed; Scott's "Hunting Song" with its lusty refrain,

Waken, lords and ladies gay

reiterated at the opening and at the close of each of its stanzas, are cases in illustration of this kind of one-line-refrain organization. Burns's "For a' That and a' That" repeats its refrain "For a' that and a' that" many times, not at the beginning nor at the end but within the poem; and Alan Seeger's "I Have a Rendezvous with Death" states its refrain of awful earnestness,

I have a rendezvous with death

at the beginning of the poem and at the close of the poem, and also twice within it. It requires little scrutiny to see that the sequence of repeated refrains is the structural pattern that sustains these poetic utterances. Indeed, these are hardly conceivable as poems without their recurrent refrains.

In other instances not a one-line but a two-line refrain is used in repetitious combination as the outline of the poem. The anonymous "The Nut Brown Maid"<sup>27</sup> with its two refrains, both emphasizing constancy in love,

For in my mind, of all mankind  
I love but you alone.

and

For I must to the greenwood go,  
Alone a banished man.

<sup>27</sup> *Oxford Book of English Verse*, No. 25.

repeated alternately, by opposites, some fifteen times, is an unusually effective example of this pattern. Ben Jonson's "The Shadow," with its two-line facetious refrain,

Say, are not women truly, then,  
Styled but the shadow of us men.

twice repeated, at the close of each of its two stanzas; George Wither's "I Loved a Lass," with its two-line mock-serious refrain,

But now, alas! she 's left me,  
Falero, lero, loo!

six times repeated, once at the end of each stanza; and the two exemplary lyrics at the close of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, one on spring and one on winter, with their two-line (perhaps three-line!) refrain of sportive humor and bland melancholy,

Cuckoo!  
Cuckoo, Cuckoo!—O word of fear  
Unpleasing to a married ear.

and

To-whit!  
To-who!—A merry note,  
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

twice restated in each poem, at the close of each of two stanzas—are concrete examples of this repetitious pattern in the form of a recurring refrain. Such a pattern of repetition of a refrain, emphasizing the pattern of contrast, is unusually effective in the vigorous modern poem, "Tomorrow," by John Masfield:

## TOMORROW

Oh, yesterday the cutting edge drank thirstily and deep,  
The upland outlaws ringed us in and herded us as sheep,  
They drove us from the stricken field and bayed us into keep;

*But tomorrow*

*By the living God, we'll try the game again!*

Oh, yesterday our little troop was ridden through and through,  
Our swaying, tattered pennons fled, a broken, beaten few,  
And all a summer afternoon they hunted us and slaw;

*But tomorrow*

*By the living God, we'll try the game again!*

And here upon the turret-top the bale-fire glowers red,  
The wake-lights burn and drip about our hacked, disfigured dead,  
And many a broken heart is here and many a broken head;

*But tomorrow*

*By the living God, we'll try the game again!*

It will be noted, too, that these recurring refrains are not only the bases of the structural patterns but also the themes of the poems.

In discussing the organic pattern of a poem consisting of a repeated two-line refrain, we must not overlook Kipling's "Recessional," one of our English masterpieces. This poem, a much finer bit of work than sometimes critics make it out—the chief objection seems to be that it is not quite like any of his other poems!—achieves much of its effectiveness by the organic pattern of its five-times-repeated two-line refrain,

Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

a refrain that is at once the most humble and the most exalting phrase in English literary history. Need we hint that the poem was written for the refrain, and not the refrain for the

poem? It is the refrain that is the theme of the poem—all else is largely prose narrative. This refrain, repeated, in slightly variant readings, at the close of each of its five stanzas, so that this series of recurring statements becomes the pattern of the poem, again and again holds up before us the very theme and idea which Kipling obviously wished his reader to grasp and understand:

## RECESSIONAL

God of our Fathers, known of old—  
Lord of our far-flung battle-line—  
Beneath Whose awful Hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine—  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies—  
The captains and the kings depart—  
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart.  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called our navies melt away,  
On dune and headland sinks the fire—  
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget.

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—  
Such boasting as the Gentiles use  
Or lesser breeds without the Law—

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust  
In reeking tube and iron shard,  
All valiant dust that builds on dust,  
And guarding calls not Thee to guard—  
For frantic boast and foolish word,  
Thy mercy on Thy People, Lord! Amen.

When a poetic utterance is unusually lyrical, it is not infrequent that two refrains are repeated throughout the poetic product. By such an organic structure, the theme, the care-free spirit of joyous love and youth, of Shakespeare's "It Was a Lover and His Lass," is kept clearly and effectively before us. It will be noted that the two refrains are the one-line

With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino

and the three-line,

In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;  
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Both refrains have the spirit of carefree abandon of joyous love and youth.

IT WAS A LOVER AND HIS LASS

It was a lover and his lass,  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,  
That o'er the green corn field did pass,  
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;  
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Between the acres of the rye,  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,  
These pretty country folds would lie,  
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;  
Sweet lovers love the spring.

This carol they began that hour,  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,  
How that life was but a flower  
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;  
Sweet lovers love the spring.

And, therefore, take the present time  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,  
For love is crowned with the prime  
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;  
Sweet lovers love the spring.

This poem is almost pure lyric. Until our attention has been directed to it, we scarcely detect that only two lines in each stanza are not repeated refrain; all the remainder of each stanza, and thus of the entire poem, consists of but the two refrains thrice recurrent. Almost as purely lyric is Sir Thomas Wyatt's "The Appeal." Here, instead of the theme being the emotion of the carefree spirit of joyous love and youth, as in "It Was a Lover and His Lass," the theme is the emotion of pleading grief. There is a pathetic and yearning appeal in the two refrains. The one,

And wilt thou leave me thus?

is repeated twice at the beginning and the close of each strophe. The other,

Say nay! say nay!

is repeated once at the close of each strophe. It is obvious that here, too, the refrains are the essence of the poem—all else is but “narrative” background. The arrangement of the refrain is also the structural pattern of the poem. Though already quoted above, the poem is here given again:

#### THE APPEAL

And wilt thou leave me thus?  
Say nay, say nay, for shame!  
—To save thee from the blame  
Of all my grief and grome.  
And wilt thou leave me thus?  
Say nay! say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,  
That hath loved thee so long  
In wealth and woe among:  
And is thy heart so strong  
As for to leave me thus?  
Say nay! say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,  
That hath given thee my heart  
Never for to depart  
Neither for pain nor smart:  
And wilt thou leave me thus?  
Say nay! say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,  
And have no more pity  
Of him that loveth thee?  
Alas! thy cruelty!  
And wilt thou leave me thus?  
Say nay! say nay!

And finally, just as a chorus is the organic basis around which many of our marching songs, our revival hymns, and many of our popular songs—the art of producing a popular song is to get a “catchy” refrain or chorus first and then add a text to it—so a recurring stanza refrain is the structural pattern in many poems. Perhaps it is not too much to say that one of the secrets of Kipling’s popularity is his frequent use of the “catchy” refrain, often a stanza refrain. His “Gunga Din,” “Tommy,” “Danny Deevee” “Road to Mandalay” are well known because of the inescapable stanza refrain of each.

Whitman’s “O Captain, My Captain,” Longfellow’s “My Lost Youth,” Poe’s “The Bells,” Richard Hovey’s “At the End of the Day,” with its vigorous refrain,

Give a cheer!  
For our hearts shall not give way.  
Here’s to a dark tomorrow  
And here’s to a brave today!

Amy Lowell’s “Wind,” with its dancing refrain,

Laughing, dancing, sunny wind,  
Whistling, howling, rainy wind,  
North, South, East, West,  
Each is the wind I like the best.

John Skelton’s “To Mistress Margaret Hussey,” with its vivacious refrain,

Merry Margaret,  
As midsummer flower,  
Gentle as falcon  
Or hawk of the tower.

Cale Young Rice’s “The Mystic,” with its mystic and yearning refrain,



I have ridden the wind,  
I have ridden the sea,  
I have ridden the moon and the stars,  
I have set my feet in the stirrup seat  
Of a comet coursing Mars,  
And everywhere,  
Thro' earth and air  
My thought speeds, lighting-shod,  
It comes to a place where, checking pace  
It cries, "Beyond lies God!"

William Stevenson's old drinking song, "Jolly Good Ale and Old," with its bacchantic refrain,

Back and side go bare, go bare,  
Both foot and hand go cold,  
But, belly, God send thee good ale enough,  
Whether it be new or old.

all are examples of stanza refrains which, in recurrent sequence, are the outline pattern of the poem. In every instance, too, these stanzas are statement and exemplification of the emotional spirit and idea that is the keynote of the poetic utterance. Jacques in *As You Like It* may "suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs," but William Shakespeare can "suck" joyous abandon and optimism out of the bitterness and disappointments in life. In his famous "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind" he has stated the bitterness of life in the "text" of the poem, but the theme of the poem, its essential poetry of optimism, is in the four-line stanza refrain which, repeated twice, becomes the organic pattern of the poetic expression. Note also the pattern of contrast.

## BLOW, BLOW, THOU WINTER WIND

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,  
Thou art not so unkind  
As man's ingratitude;  
Thy tooth is not so keen  
Because thou art not seen,  
Although thy breath be rude.

Heigh ho! sing heigh ho! unto the green holly:  
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.  
Then, heigh ho! the holly!  
This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,  
Thou dost not bite so nigh  
As benefits forgot:  
Though thou the waters warp,  
Thy sting is not so sharp  
As friends remember'd not.

Heigh ho! sing heigh ho! unto the green holly.  
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:  
Then, heigh ho! the holly!  
This life is most jolly.

## PATTERN IN THE STANZA

With the fundamentally rhythmic nature of creative poetic utterance, with repetitious parallelism as a tendency in poetic phrasing, and with reiteration as a basis of organic pattern in a poem as a whole, frequently the recurrence of a refrain, we need not seek far for the organic basis of stanza form. Here parallel repetition and recurrent refrain, singly or in combination, are united in more definitely fixed patterns, held together, in most instances, by organic rime

schemes. While stanza forms<sup>28</sup> are naturally somewhat more artificially regular and schematic in their outlines than are the patterns of poems as a whole, still they are not altogether mechanical. Above all they are not accidental. Basically they are organic; that is, they are rhythmic and repetitious tendencies in emotional poetic utterance reduced more definitely to more stable and more fixed structural schemes.

Simplified strophic effect is just as natural—and just as essential—in poetry as paragraphing is to prose. As James, the psychologist, has reminded us, our powers of attentiveness do not endure for long at any given time and must be supported by recurrent stimuli in kind. Creative emotional functioning, we have seen, appears in a long-sustained rhythm, but this rhythm is broken up and organically supported by a series of minor rhythms within the larger rhythm. “Rhythm,” says Gummere, “is a succession and involution of unities, that is, unities within unities. The term is as applicable to a succession of verses as to a succession of feet, and to a succession of stanzas as to a succession of verses.” Thus both the reader’s mind and the creative functioning of the poet operate in a sustained series of impulses. This means that a sustained series of strophes or stanzas in poetry or a sustained series of paragraphs in a bit of prose discourse is a natural and organic aid in getting the under-

<sup>28</sup> For studies in stanza form, see Schipper’s *A History of English Versification*, Part II, chapters iii–ix, with a wealth of illustrative material; Kaluza’s *A Short History of English Versification*, pages 205–233 and 288–361; Guest’s *A History of English Rhythms*, Volume II, Book IV; Conson’s *A Primer of English Verse*, chapters vi–xx; Caroline Strong’s “History and Relation of the Tail-Rhyme Strophe in Latin, French, and English,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XV, 371–421; Verrier’s *Essai sur les principes de la metrique anglaise*, Part I, Book II, chapter ix.

lying theme and idea over to the one who peruses. As primitive man evolved into the more highly civilized state, more and more he became the conscious artist; that is, more and more he desired to communicate himself effectively to others. The more conscious our effort to make clear and to communicate effectively our singleness of effect in either poetry or prose, often the more conscious our effort to make strophic and stanza effects or to paragraph definitely. Of course, the important thing in creative literature is not to have either too obviously mechanical: in good art, the elbows of structure do not protrude unduly. In any instance, no poetry in the world's literature has ever remained over long in its simplified primitive form; sooner or later strophe and stanza forms have appeared in more or less well-defined manifestations. Most of us think of Greek and Latin poetry only in terms of the blank verse of Homer and Virgil, needing but to remind ourselves of the numerous Greek choral dramatic spectacles, odes, and elegies, and of the mass of Latin odes, songs, and ditties, all of which have highly developed strophe and stanza forms. Moreover, turning to Hebrew poetry as printed in its literary forms—say, in Moulton's *The Modern Reader's Bible*—we have plentiful evidence of strophic forms there. Turning to any other literature we may choose, we find similar manifestation and development. Indeed, one of the indications of high poetic development in almost any language is the variety and subtle complexity of its stanza patterns.

On casually glancing at primitive poetry, as it appears nowadays on the printed page, we are inclined hastily to conclude that it is not stanzaic. It is not exactly stanzaic, because stanza form means a unit grouping due to a unifying action or dominant underlying emotion, and therefore

implies (1) a grouping into a single definite unit of like ideas or closely related material and (2) an organizing of the unit according to some well-defined conventional pattern. Moreover, stanza form in poetry, in these days, means not only the grouping and organizing of materials into regular units, but also the (3) printing of these units separately on the page, so that typographically they are easily detected by the eye as individual units. This typographical arrangement of stanza form on the page is an accepted convention in modern verse. Perhaps one of the chief reasons why stanza form in a well-developed pattern does not appear in primitive poetry is because primitive poetry, primarily, was composed for the ear and not for the eye. Perhaps if primitive poetry had been regularly written down, instead of passed on to succeeding generations by word of mouth, it would have developed, rather early, definite stanza forms. We must remember that modern and contemporary poetry is written for both the eye and the ear—opinions to the contrary notwithstanding.

And yet, in a simplified way, primitive poetry had in it the very fundamental of stanzaic unit. For evidence of this we need but to return to the primitive poems printed in the foregoing parts of this volume. The placing of like by the side of like in parallel repetition is the very basis of first strophic and then stanzaic effects.<sup>20</sup> So long as a poem dealt

<sup>20</sup> Anglo-Saxon verse is essentially strophic. For evidence of actual stanzaic form, see the well-known "Deor's Lament," which is divided into irregularly varying strophes, each ending in the identical refrain "This ofereode, thisses swa maeg", see also the stanzaic form in the First Riddle of Cynewulf in an article by W. W. Lawrence in *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, N.S., X, 247 ff. See also Ten Brink's *English Literature*, translated by Kennedy, Volume I. Some German scholars, see volumes by Kaluza and Schipper for résumé, declare that they detect four-line stanza form in *Beowulf*.

with a given theme from but one simple angle, there was no tendency to differentiate groups; but the moment man's mind became more complex in its functioning and it considered a theme from several closely related angles, immediately there was a strong tendency to differentiate the groups of lines that, placing like by the side of like, dealt with the several aspects of the theme. Thus the Twenty-third Proverb, "Wine and Woe," considers the subject from four angles: (1) the question, "Who hath woe?"; (2) the answer to the question; (3) the warning against wine; and (4) the results of overindulgence in the intoxicating drink. The printed poem shows these divisions in four separate groups or strophes.

WINE AND WOE

Who hath woe?  
 Who hath sorrow?  
 Who hath contentions?  
 Who hath complaining?  
 Who hath wounds without cause?  
 Who hath redness of eyes?

They that tarry long at the wine;  
 They that go to seek out mixed wine.

Look not thou upon the wine  
 When it is red,  
 When it giveth its color in the cup,  
 When it goeth down smoothly:

At the last it biteth like a serpent,  
 And stingeth like an adder.

Thine eyes shall behold strange things,  
And thine heart shall utter froward things.  
Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the  
    midst of the sea,  
Or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.  
“They have stricken me,  
    And I was not hurt;  
They have beaten me,  
    And I felt it not;  
When shall I awake?  
    I will seek it yet again.”

In the Fifteenth Psalm, “The Consecrated Life,” the answer to the question, “Lord, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?” is given from four specific points of view. These four points of view are grouped into four strophes placed within the inclosing semi-envelope figure (question and answer), the pattern of the poem as a whole:

#### THE CONSECRATED LIFE

Lord, who shall sojourn in thy Tabernacle?  
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

He that walketh uprightly,  
And worketh righteousness,  
And speaketh truth in his heart.

He that slandereth not with his tongue,  
Nor doeth evil to his friend,  
Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor.

In whose eyes a reprobate is despised;  
But he honoreth them that fear the Lord.

He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.  
He that putteth not out his money to usury,  
Nor taketh reward against the innocent.

He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Such strophic effect is highly prevalent in English poetry. Matthew Arnold considered the theme in his "Dover Beach" from four closely related angles and then grouped his material into four strophes; in his "Philomela," he approached his subject from three angles and then expressed it in terms of three strophes. Wordsworth, in his "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," conceived his theme from some dozen points of approach and then communicated it to us in some dozen sequential strophic units. Edgar Lee Masters, in his "Silence" (above, pages 142 ff.), a bit of contemporary vers libre, felt his theme from four points of vantage and then grouped his material illustrating that theme into four well-defined strophes. Tennyson, in "The Lotos-Eaters," balancing, as it were, two opposing points of view of life, conceived his subject from some seven points of view and then wrote his poem in seven groups or strophes. Milton, first of all, conceived and divided his *Paradise Lost* into twelve large divisions or Books—the traditional number of Books in epic literature—but subdivided each book into a number of sequential strophes according to the natural grouping of his material. Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, Scott's *Lady of the Lake*, Browning's *The Ring and the Book*, Pope's *Essay on Man*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* ("Prolog" and "Knightes Tale"), and Amy Lowell's "Patterns," are poems whose themes are expressed and communicated effectively via strophic divisions. Indeed, it is quite natural that the creative poetic mind should do this: it moves forward



over a period of sustained rhythmic functioning in terms of the minor periods of functioning organically supporting the larger unit of functioning.

Contemporary writers of free verse are correct in holding that strophic division in vers libre is a natural method of poetic expression. It has always been a natural method; and it always will be a natural method. Harriet Monroe, wishing to express her reproachful sympathy for the gnarled and growth-stunted pine tree on the mountain-top, presented it, in her "The Pine at Timber-Line," from four angles: (1) the query, "What has bent and twisted you?"; (2) "You are struggling"; (3) "Be still, be satisfied!" and "Why tarry here?" But, for purposes of further emphasis, she has subdivided numbers 2 and 4 and has expressed herself in six strophes. Note the rhythm of the poem as a whole, of the strophic units, and of the lines or groups of lines:

#### THE PINE AT TIMBER-LINE

What has bent you,  
Warped and twisted you,  
Torn and crippled you?  
What has embittered you,  
O lonely tree?

You search the rocks for a footing,  
dragging scrawny roots;  
You bare your thin breast to the storms,  
and fling out wild arms behind you;  
You throw back your witch-like head,  
with wisps of hair stringing the wind.

You fight with the snows,  
You rail and shriek at the tempests.  
Old before your time, you challenge the cold stars.

Be still, be satisfied!  
Stand straight like your brothers of the valley,  
The soft green valley of summer down below.

Why front the endless winter of the peak?  
Why seize the lightning in your riven hands?  
Why cut the driven wind and shriek aloud?

Why tarry here?

It is clear that strophic form results (1) from the natural tendency to place like alongside like in groups, (2) from both a natural tendency and a conscious desire to communicate one's self in a sequential series of minor units, and (3) from a conscious desire to make clearer and more emphatic by subdividing a large unit into two or more smaller units and then printing them apart. Structurally, from every angle, "The Pine at Timber-Line" is rhythmic and repetitious.

In other poems, however, not strophe but stanza forms are employed. It is obvious that stanza forms are a bit more artificial in details but none the less organically strophic in nature. And once a stanza pattern has been employed in a poem it is continued throughout. Psychologically speaking, the human mind likes recurrent pattern once it has been set up. This is why, too, in music we like that selection which reverts again and again to its dominant tone or theme.<sup>30</sup> Not infrequently the emotional value in a poetic utterance is communicated to us via narrative of one kind or another in which there is progress step by step. These progressive steps are expressed and emphasized for us in a sequence of similar

<sup>30</sup> For an enlightening treatment of parallels between music and verse, see *The Physical Basis of Rime*, by Henry Lanz (Stanford University Press, 1930).

stanza patterns. In such an instance the stanza performs the same function in the poem as the paragraph would do if the narrative had been written in prose. Any unit that is subordinate and contributory to the main sequence requires separate unit treatment. Such separate unit treatment in stanza form emphasizes the value of that unit; and a series of emphasized sequential units emphasizes and enhances the value of the whole. Scott's "Lochinvar" is an excellent illustration of such stanzaic treatment and emphasis of narrative units in the progress of the story, which is but a medium by which the author communicates his underlying theme (emotion) to us. And Oliver Wendell Holmes's "The Last Leaf" is an unusually apt example of stanza treatment and stanza emphasis in a sequential series of pictures making up a whole poem. It is these pictures by which the author gets his underlying emotion of the whole poem over to us. We must recall that emotion per se cannot be directly expressed but must be suggested to us in terms of concrete experiences and pictures somewhat common to both author and reader. You will note that each stanza—and there are eight of them—presents each a separate angle of the theme of the poem in a complete unit picture. These units, emphasized because they are individual stanzas strung together and held together by the underlying theme (emotion), are what make the longer poem a unit. In reading it, you will not fail to note (1) the rhythm of the poem as a whole, (2) the rhythm of each stanza as a unit, (3) the rhythm of each line or group of lines as the case may be, and (4) the rhythm of even the speech groups. "The Last Leaf" was one of Abraham Lincoln's favorite poems, because of its underlying pathos. Perhaps this may be a suggestion as to the theme or the dominant emotion in the poem:

## THE LAST LEAF

I saw him once before,  
As he passed by the door,  
And again  
The pavement stones resound,  
As he totters o'er the ground  
With his cane.

They say that in his prime,  
Ere the pruning-knife of Time  
Cut him down,  
Not a better man was found  
By the Crier on his round  
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,  
And he looks at all he meets,  
Sad and wan;  
And he shakes his feeble head,  
That it seems as if he said,  
"They are gone."

The mossy marbles rest  
On the lips that he has prest  
In their bloom,  
And the names he loved to hear  
Have been carved for many a year  
On the tomb.

My grandmamma has said—  
Poor old lady, she is dead  
Long ago—  
That he had a Roman nose,  
And his cheek was like a rose,  
In the snow.

But now his nose is thin,  
And it rests upon his chin,  
Like a staff,  
And a crook is in his back,  
And a melancholy crack  
In his laugh.

I know it is a sin  
For me to sit and grin  
At him here;  
But the old three-cornered hat,  
And the breeches, and all that  
Are so queer!

And if I should live to be  
The last leaf upon the tree  
In the spring,  
Let them smile, as I do now,  
At the old forsaken bough  
Where I cling.

Accordingly, whether the minor groupings in a poem be strophes or stanzas, these organic units constantly hold before us the theme of the poem. And that is what poetic technique is for.

Organic conventionality is a fundamental characteristic of all creative art—poetry is no exception. While the impulse to form strophic units in poetry is a natural tendency, when we express sincerely our deepest thoughts and feelings we cannot help being prone to reduce those units to somewhat conventionalized forms. It is psychologically economical to do so: in composing, once having made a form we easily employ it again; and, in reading, once having recognized a form readily, we recognize it a second and a third time.

Rhythm and pattern of a poem, as we have seen, tend toward crystallizing into set forms—and strophic units follow the same bent. Reducing these phenomena to set patterns, to mechanical manifestations if you like, is but the result of the human mind wanting to recognize its own creative phenomena and recognizing them instantly. There must be no vagueness and no uncertainty about art form. Except when obviously artificial and unfitted, conventionalized forms and patterns are constant sources of delight, to both author and reader, because we recognize in them attempts to express ourselves in easily perceived units. Let us remember that art in poetry is poetic utterance reduced to an easily recognized pattern most appropriate to our natural expression.

#### STANZA PATTERN

And what, we may ask, is the basis of stanza pattern in English poetry? Really the answer is not far to seek. Since the placing of like alongside like is an organic and natural phenomenon in poetic utterance, the couplet is a very fundamental element—singly or in combinations of twos, threes, etc.—in stanza pattern. Obviously the couplet is the most simplified of our stanza forms. Now the couplet stanza is not merely the placing of two indifferent lines side by side and tying them together by rime. Heroic couplets or other couplets in direct riming sequence, as in Pope's *Essay on Man*, Burns's "Tam O'Shanter," and Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," are not stanzaic in the proper sense of the term. Two lines properly organized as a couplet express a very definite unity and singleness of effect. Indeed, the combination is organic: it has identity by itself, but loses that identity the moment it is combined with something else. When Joyce Kilmer wrote "Trees," he thought and felt his

subject from six different angles, each an aspect of his larger underlying theme. Each aspect is expressed in a rimed couplet stanza complete in itself as a unit. Kilmer expressed his own peculiar reaction in a highly individual way. The effect that he achieved in each of these couplet stanzas could not have been secured in any other combination of the lines into stanzas.

First let us read the poem by couplets as he actually wrote it, dwelling as we read upon each stanza. Let us catch the spirit and the idea of the entire poem as a unit; and then let us feel the spirit of each stanza and see how peculiarly individualistic each one is:

#### TREES

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast,

A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain,  
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

Now let us read the poem written not in couplet strophes but in four-line combinations. Note that the peculiar poetic effect of the couplet stanza is here completely lost. It is no

longer quite the same poem. Such four-line grouping is not organic and we feel that it is not:

TREES

I think that I shall never see  
 A poem lovely as a tree.  
 A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
 Against the earth's sweet flowing breast,  
  
 A tree that looks at God all day,  
 And lifts her leafy arms to pray;  
 A tree that may in summer wear  
 A nest of robins in her hair;  
  
 Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
 Who intimately lives with rain.  
 Poems are made by fools like me,  
 But only God can make a tree.

Now let us read it as a poem written in two six-line stanzas. The beautiful effect of the original has practically ceased to exist. Stanza organization could hardly be worse:

TREES

I think that I shall never see  
 A poem lovely as a tree.  
 A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
 Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;  
 A tree that looks at God all day,  
 And lifts her leafy arms to pray,  
  
 A tree that may in summer wear  
 A nest of robins in her hair;  
 Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
 Who intimately lives with rain.  
 Poems are made by fools like me,  
 But only God can make a tree.



And finally, let us read it as a continuous poem written in riming couplets. This is, perhaps, somewhat better in its effect than the other two combinations, but still it is an inferior substitute for the original.

## TREES

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.  
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;  
A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;  
A tree that may in summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;  
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.  
Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

It is quite evident that Kilmer's "Trees," to get its proper effect, had to be written in one form and one form only—the couplet stanza form. A similar experiment conducted with Tennyson's "Locksley Hall," with Browning's "The Body and Angel," with Whittier's "Maud Muller," or with the ballads "Binnorie" and "The Three Ravens" will show that the couplet stanza is a specific entity which loses that entity when inorganically combined with something else.

Couplets are sometimes combined most advantageously into groups of two, three, four, five, etc., and sometimes to one of these groups is added a refrain. Examination of such groupings shows that, while the stanza in each case is an organic unit, still the individual couplet also retains something of a separate unity, though organically, in theme, supporting

the stanza as a unit. Thus the anonymous "There Is a Lady Sweet and Kind" employs a stanza pattern of two couplets, the last line serving also as a refrain throughout the poem [*aa + bb (R)*]:

There is a Lady sweet and kind,  
Was never face so pleased my mind;  
I did but see her passing by,  
And yet I love her till I die.

And Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" [*aa + bb*]:

And I will make thee beds of roses  
And a thousand fragrant posies;  
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle  
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.

And Edmund Waller's "On a Girdle" [*aa + bb*]:

A narrow compass! and yet there  
Dwelt all that's good, and all that's fair!  
Give me but what this ribband bound,  
Take all the rest the sun goes round.

And Burns's "Ae Fond Kiss" [*aa + bb*]:

Had we never loved sae kindly,  
Had we never loved sae blindly,  
Never met—or never parted—  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> For other stanza forms in two couplets, see the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Nos. 121, 122, 176, 289, 304, 346, 348, 477, 499, 590, 652, and 756.

For stanza forms in two couplets, the last line of which serves as a refrain in the poem, see *ibid.*, Nos. 21, 70, 168, 176, 613, and 883.

On the other hand, Longfellow's "Excelsior" and "The Rainy Day" use a two-couplet stanza plus a refrain [*aa + bb + a (R)*]:

THE RAINY DAY

The day is cold and dark and dreary;  
It rains and the wind is never weary;  
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,  
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,  
And the day is dark and dreary.

Aline Kilmer's "Experience" employs a three-couplet stanza [*aa + bb + cc*]:

Deborah danced, when she was two,  
As buttercups and daffodils do,  
Spirited, frail, naïvely bold,  
Her hair a ruffled crest of gold,  
And whenever she spoke her voice went singing  
Like water up from a fountain springing.

And George Wither's "The Lover's Resolution" employs a three-couplet stanza plus a couplet refrain used throughout the poem [*aa + bb + cc + (R) dd*]*—really a four-couplet pattern:*

Great, or good, or kind, or fair,  
I will ne'er the more despair;  
If she love me, this believe,  
I will die ere she shall grieve;  
If she slight me when I woo,  
I can scorn and let her go;  
For if she be not for me,  
What care I for whom she be?

And finally, Wordsworth's "Perfect Woman" uses a stanza of five couplets, each somewhat individual yet all five bound

together by the underlying theme into a larger unit entity  
 $[aa + bb + cc + dd + ee]$ :

She was a phantom of delight,  
 When first she gleam'd upon my sight,  
 A lovely apparition, sent  
 To be a moment's ornament;  
 Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,  
 Like twilights, too, her dusky hair;  
 But all things else about her drawn  
 From May-time and the cheerful dawn;  
 A dancing shape, an image gay,  
 To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

Of course couplet combinations are employed in other varied involved patterns. For instance, Henry H. Bennet's "The Flag Goes By" [the pattern is  $R + aa + b + R + b$ ]:

Hats off!  
 Along the street there comes  
 A blare of bugles, a ruffle of drums,  
 A flash of color beneath the sky.

Hats off!  
 The flag is passing by!

Or Margaret L. Woods's "*Gaudeamus Igitur*" [ $aa + bb + cc$ ]:

Come, no more of grief and dying!  
 Sing the time too swiftly flying,  
     Just an hour  
     Youth's a flower;  
 Give me roses to remember  
 In the shadow of December.

Or Walt Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!" which employs a stanza of two couplets plus a refrain quatrain, the latter definitely in contrasted mood to the first [*aa + bb + (R) abcb*]:

O Captain! My Captain! our fearful trip is done;  
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won;  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring:  
    But O heart! heart! heart!  
    O the bleeding drops of red  
    Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
    Fallen cold and dead!

And for still more involved "couplet" pattern stanzas see Austin Dobson's "To a Greek Girl," Lord Houghton's "Strangers Yet," Byron's "Maid of Athens," Scott's "Hunting Song," and Richard Lovelace's "To Lucasta, Going beyond the Seas," a stanza of which will illustrate:

If to be absent were to be  
    Away from thee;  
Or that when I am gone  
    You or I were alone;  
Then, my Lucasta, might I crave  
Pity from blustering wind, or wallowing wave.

In reading any of these stanza patterns composed of combinations of couplets, the proper poetic effect will be secured if, at one and the same time, we read them as stanza units and also as couplet units.

While the couplet and combination-couplet stanzas are rather frequently employed, the three-line stanza (riming *aaa*, or *aba*, or not riming at all) does not lend itself well to variety. If the rimed form be used, two or three sequences

of such similar rimes frequently prove too monotonous. Sometimes varied effect is secured by an added refrain. Shakespeare's "The Phoenix and the Turtle," Richard Crawshaw's "Wishes for a Supposed Mistress," Tennyson's "The Two Voices," Stedman's "The Ordeal by Fire," Herrick's "A Meditation for His Mistress," and "Upon Julia's Clothes," employ the three-line rimed *aaa* stanza. From Herrick's "Upon Julia's Clothes":

Whenas in silks my Julia goes,  
Then, then methinks, how sweetly flows  
The liquefaction of her clothes.

Dante's *Divina Commedia*, William Morris' *The Defence of Guinevere*, Paul Verlaine's "A Confession," Browning's "The Statue and the Bust," Tennyson's "The Two Voices," Byron's "Francesca da Rimini," and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" use a three-line stanza riming *aba* ("Terza rima," when used *aba, bcb, cdc, ded*, etc.):

O Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing, . . .

Charles Lamb's "The Old Familiar Faces" and Wilbur Underwood's "The Cattle of His Hand" employ the unrimed three-line stanza. From the latter:

All night long, through the starlight and the stillness,  
Through the warmth of dawn and the burning of noontide,  
Onward we strain with a mighty resounding of hoof-beats.

More frequently the three-line (*aaa*) has a refrain to relieve a possible monotony. Bruce's "Bannockburn," Thomas Nash's "Spring," Cowper's "To Mary," and Stevenson's

"Requiem" have such a stanza—here apt, indeed, for its purpose [*aaaR*]:<sup>32</sup>

#### REQUIEM

Under the wide and starry sky,  
Dig the grave and let me lie.  
Glad did I live and gladly die,  
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me: .  
Here he lies where he longed to be,  
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.

No doubt the most popular stanza form in English is the quatrain (rimes *aaaa* or *aabb* or *abab* or *abcb* or *abba*). Certainly it has been most frequently used. Some of our best poems have been composed in this pattern: Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (iambic five-stress lines riming *abab*, elegiac stanza), Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (special quatrain form), Fitzgerald's *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, hundreds of short lyrics, and the English and Scottish *Ballads*. It has been held that it is the popularity of the ballad<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For other examples, see the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Nos. 7, 34, 45, 110, 166, 471, 473, 561, and 578.

<sup>33</sup> The early form of the ballad was four lines (4*xa*, 3*xa*, 4*xa*, 3*xa*) riming *abcb*. The omission of the rime in the third line signalizes the fact that the stanza could be (and was) regarded indifferently as made up of either two long lines or four short ones. Thus the famous *Chevy Chase* ballad is found ("Ashmole MS," ca. 1560) written in two long lines:

The yngglyshe men had ther bowys ybent yer hartes wer good  
ynoughe

The first off arros that the shote off seven skore spear-mey the  
sloughe.

See Flügel's *Neuenglisches Lesebuch*, page 199.

(rime *abcb*) in our literature that has established the quatrain as the most popular of stanzaic patterns in English. This theory, however, is not altogether tenable. Not only is there a serious questioning today of our long-accepted theories of the origin and nature of our ballads,<sup>34</sup> but also, for the most part, our ballads have been material for study by students of literature rather than poetry familiar to the masses. We may need to seek elsewhere for the explanation as to why the quatrain (the *abab*, or the *abcb* forms) is so popular a stanza pattern in English poetry. The four-line stanza is popular in French, Spanish, and Italian poetry also.

The popularity of the quatrain is, in all likelihood, due to the definite psychological and esthetic effects such a stanza has on the reader. It has, of course, the same effect upon the composer of the poem. The human ear delights in having an interval between two rimes; hence if an unrimed line, or a differently rimed line, comes between two lines that do rime, we get a much more subtle and pleasing effect than if the rimes come together in immediate sequence. Rimes *aaaa*, *bbbb*, *cccc*;<sup>35</sup> or rimes *aabb*, *acdd*, *eaff*, etc., tend toward ex-

<sup>34</sup> See Louise Pound's *Poetic Origins and the Ballad*.

<sup>35</sup> Song from "Harleian MS," 2253 (see Böddeker's *Altenenglische Dichtungen*, page 191), *aaaa*:

"Sute iesu, king of blyse,  
Myn huerte love, min huerte lysse,  
Dou art sute myd ywisse,  
Wo is him þat þe shel misse!"

From Shelley's *The Sensitive Plant*, *aabb*.

"A Sensitive Plant in a garden grew,  
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,  
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,  
And closed them beneath the kisses of night."



treme monotony to a Nordic's ear. Pope's couplets, polished and skillfully used as they are, become highly monotonous after a period of reading. Even a fairly long poem of couplet stanzas or of three-line running stanzas becomes wearisome. But the *abab* alternating rimed lines of Henley's "*Invictus*" (lines having four stresses each) are pleasing to the ear: this pattern of arrangement of lines prevents the monotony that comes from couplets or triple combinations:

Out of the night that covers me,  
 Black as the pit from pole to *pole*,  
 I thank whatever gods may be  
 For my unconquerable *soul*.

This quatrain has lines *4xa*, *4xa*, *4xa*, *4xa*, intensified by the rime scheme of "me, *pole*, be, *soul*" (*abab*). And even when only two of the lines, usually the second and the fourth, rime, the two rimes are separated by the third line, so that again we have a pleasing effect. Thus Robert Burns's "A Red, Red Rose" (lines are *4xa*, *3xa*, *4xa*, *3xa*), with its quatrain lines riming *abcb*, satisfies us:

O my Luve 's like a red, red rose  
 That 's newly sprung in *June*:  
 O my Luve 's like the melodic  
 That 's sweetly play'd in *tune*!

Such an arrangement of the lines, through the alternating rime, gives the stanza a subtle pendulum or rhythmic movement. The alternating swing back and forth, often found in Hebrew poetry as well, is pleasing.

There is a second reason why the quatrain stanza is popular. Rhythm is always popular, for the reason that it

is fundamental in all poetic utterance. As we have just seen, the alternating rimed lines induce a rhythmical swing, a pendulum movement, when we read such a strophe. Moreover, a four-line stanza very frequently is composed of four-stressed and three-stressed lines placed alternately. This very alternation of longer and shorter is rhythmical—pendulum-like, and rhythm is always pleasing. Such a stanza riming *abcb*, is ballad meter or common meter. Coleridge wrote:

The bride hath paced into the hall,  
Red as a rose is she;  
Nodding their heads before her goes  
The merry minstrelsy.

Even a novice will detect the rhythm induced by such an arrangement of longer and shorter lines alternating.

Moreover, there is a third reason why the quatrain is popular in English poetry. In the chapter on meter it will be pointed out that the very nature of our modern English vocabulary makes for the prevalence of "iambic" meter in our verse. Most of our quatrains are written in "iambic" feet. The pendulum effect of alternating rimes and the pendulum effect of the four-stress and three-stress lines alternating combined with the natural "iambic" foot go far toward making the quatrain popular in English. Indeed, too, it is thus rather easy to write. Most amateurs and novices in composing poetry will naturally fall into expressing themselves in quatrains. Note, in Robert Herrick's "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time," how rhythmically the quatrains (alternating rime, alternating line-lengths) swing, how pleasing is their effect! And the "iambic" meter is "so natural":

## TO THE VIRGINS, TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,  
Old Time is still a-flying;  
And this same flower that smiles today,  
Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,  
The higher he's a-getting,  
The sooner will his race be run,  
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,  
When youth and blood are warmer;  
But being spent, the worse and worst  
Times will succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,  
And while ye may, go marry,  
For, having lost but once your prime,  
You may forever tarry.

The popularity of the quatrain is attested not only by its frequent use alone as the stanza form of many poems but also by its frequent use in combinations to make a stanza pattern. It is used in two's and three's and it is used with couplets and with refrains. If we turn to Joaquin Miller's "Columbus," O'Shaughnessy's "Ode: The Music Makers," Shelley's "The Indian Serenade," Landor's "Rose Aylmer," and Burns's "Jean," "Mary Morrison," "To Mary in Heaven," and "Highland Mary," we find each in stanzas that are two separate quatrains organically united to form the larger unit. Such a stanza should be read, of course, as a larger unit but also, at one and the same time, as two quatrains.<sup>46</sup> A verse from Burns:

<sup>46</sup> For other such two-quatrain stanzas, see the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Nos. 16, 17, 19, 20, 24, 30, 36, 43, 50, 64, 87, 89, 97, 100,

Ye banks and braes and streams around  
The castle o' Montgomery,  
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,  
Your waters never drumlie!  
There simmer first unfaulds her robes,  
And there the langest tarry;  
For there I took the last fareweel  
O' my Sweet Highland Mary.

Sir Walter Scott's "The Outlaw" employs a stanza composed of three quatrains:

O Brignall banks are wild and fair,  
And Greta woods are green  
And you may gather garlands there  
Would grace a summer-queen.  
And as I rode by Dalton-Hall  
Beneath the turrets high,  
A maiden on the castle-wall  
Was singing merrily.  
"O Brignall banks are fresh and fair,  
And Greta woods are green;  
I'd rather rove with Edmund there  
Than reign our English queen."

It is in combination with couplets or with refrains that the quatrain, when not used alone as the pattern, appears to best advantage. Thus Kipling's "Recessional" and Wordsworth's "Daffodils," on examination, are found to be written in a stanza composed of one full quatrain plus a full couplet (*abab + cc*).<sup>37</sup> Really it makes a most pleasing effect when

112, 116, 185, 205, 206, 211, 212, 334, 388, 391, 480, 481, 493, 502, 510, 534, 604, 688, 691, 708, and 781.

<sup>37</sup> For other stanzas of this sort, see the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Nos. 4, 5, 7, 8, 22, 26, 44, 51, 53, 61, 77, 102, 165, 168, 182, 184, 187,

read, as it should be, as a quatrain followed by a couplet. From "Daffodils":

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper" employs an eight-line-stanza pattern that proves to be a quatrain plus *two* couplets (*abab* + *cc* + *dd*). Again a most pleasing effect results if we read the stanza as it was written—a quatrain plus a couplet plus a second couplet:

Behold her, single in the field,  
Yon solitary Highland Lass!  
Reaping and singing by herself;  
Stop here, or gently pass!  
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,  
And sings a melancholy strain,  
O Listen! for the Vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound.

Shelley's "To a Skylark" is composed in a five-line stanza, but actually it is a quatrain with the last line prolonged into one large and final rhythmic swell [*ababb* (*R*)]:

Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest  
Like a cloud of fire;  
The blue deep thou singest  
And singing still doth soar, and soaring ever singest.

197, 202, 244, 248, 281, 301, 306, 330, 332, 343, 402, 405, 507, 520, 556, 601, 607, 611, and 750.

This is the identical stanza pattern that we find in Swinburne's "Hertha." Likewise, it gives us the same sustained rhythmic effect.

I the grain and the furrow,  
The plow-cloven clod  
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,  
The germ and the sod,  
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the  
dust which is God.

Lack of space forbids further illustration of such stanza forms; yet it would be in point to examine such stanzas as those in Browning's "Two in a Campagna" (*ababa*), Rossetti's "Sunset Wings" (*abaab*), Rossetti's "Rose Mary" (*aaaaa*), Wordsworth's "Peter Bell" (*abc cb*), and Thomas Parnell's "Song" (*aabab*). Moreover quatrains in combinations including refrains of various bizarre types may readily be found on consulting any good anthology of English poetry. The important admonition is that any stanza should be read with the identical grouping of values in which the author composed it.

Tennyson's *In Memoriam* stanza, not invented by him (Wyatt, Sydney, Shakespeare, Jonson, Milton, Rossetti, and Coleridge had used it) but perfected in its use by him—indeed, Tennyson thought he had invented it for his own purpose—scarcely belongs to the category of the common quatrain. The effect of this stanza as used by the Victorian laureate is quite different from the effect of the ordinary four-line stanza. In the first place, its line arrangement as typographically set shows that the *first* and *last* lines are the important ones and the two middle lines (indented a bit in the printed stanza form) are less strong in value; that is,

there is a diminuendo effect followed by a crescendo effect. >< This is a rhythmic pendulum swing. In the second place, the rime scheme, *abba*, intensifies this diminuendo-crescendo effect; that is, the rimes of the first and last lines are stronger than the pianissimo or soft rimes coming together in the middle of the stanza. The whole strophic form of the *In Memoriam* stanza is semi-envelope in organization, and the envelope figure, as we have seen in the discussion of this pattern earlier in this chapter, emphasizes the first and last lines.<sup>28</sup> Such a strophe is best suited to the expression, not of long-sustained moods, but of extremes of passion and emotion as they sway from intensity to moderation or abatement. The *In Memoriam* stanza, like Shelley's special stanza in "To a Skylark," is to be used to express emotional functioning of a peculiar kind only. Most often, as in the instance of Tennyson, this is extremes of passion, such as joy, sadness, pessimism, optimism, pleasure, pain. The stanza form is organically fitted for the communication of just such extremes of emotion from writer to reader. Moreover it requires a poet with depth of feeling and skill in phrasing like Tennyson to venture to use this subtle strophic pattern, *abba*. *In Memoriam* liv is as follows:

Oh, yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill,  
To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroy'd

<sup>28</sup>For a different analysis of the *In Memoriam* stanza, see Corson's *A Primer of English Verse*, pages 70-77. He holds that the emphasis is just opposite to the one defended above.

Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;  
That not a moth with vain desire  
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,  
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;  
I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last—far off—at last, to all,  
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream; but what am I?  
An infant crying in the night:  
An Infant crying for the light;  
And with no language but a cry.

If we would see the delicate stateliness of the *In Memoriam* stanza (instinct as the poem is with sorrow), with its rime scheme and line-lengths, we need but contrast it with an entirely different effect in a similar arrangement of rime and lines in Herrick's "To Violets":

Welcome, maids of honor!  
You do bring  
In the spring  
And wait upon her.

She has virgins many,  
Fresh and fair,  
Yet you are  
More sweet than any.

Or if we would see how this delicate stateliness and mood effect are violated by a change in the line arrangement, thus effecting a shift in the rime scheme from *abba* to *abab*, let us



read a type stanza in its original order and then contrast it with the changed order:

Tonight the winds begin to rise  
And roar from yonder dropping day:  
The last red leaf is whirled away,  
The rooks are blown about the skies.

Surely, in this stanza the first line and the last one are the two important lines—and they are typographically printed so in the semi-envelope pattern. Now let us see the changed effect:

Tonight the winds begin to rise  
And roar from yonder dropping day.  
The rooks are blown about the skies,  
The last red leaf is whirled away.

Take again the familiar stanza,

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Anyone who knows Tennyson's poetry intimately knows that "the common love of good" was one of his most fundamental precepts. Here he places this idea last in the stanza, the emphatic place in the pattern and the more emphasized because of the semi-envelope figure of the entire stanza. The rime scheme, *abba*, emphasizes this semi-envelope effect, this crescendo-diminuendo-crescendo pendulum movement; and when changed to the rime scheme *abab*, this effect is completely lost. Note in the changed arrangement:

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
 The civic slander and the spite;  
 Ring in the common love of good,  
 Ring in the love of truth and right.

That the line arrangement and rime scheme of the *In Memoriam* stanza cannot be changed without inflicting a change of effect needs no further demonstration. And that the first line and the last line are the important ones in the stanza, rather than the two middle lines, and should be read with such emphasis, needs no additional argument.<sup>89</sup>

While we have special stanza forms, like *ottava rima* and *terza rima*, both of which have been borrowed from the Italian and, like rime royal, used by Chaucer, they are a bit too highly artificial and too highly specialized to concern us here. For the most part they have been used only sporadically in English poetry and, except in special instances, with only a fair degree of success. Fairfax's translation of Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered," Whittier's "Ichabod," Browning's "The Lost Leader," Byron's "Beppo," "The Vision of Judgment," and "Don Juan," all but the first of which are satirical, employ the *ottava rima* stanza (eight lines, riming *ab ab ab cc*). The *terza rima* (a three-line stanza riming *aba, bcb, cdc*, etc.), used by Dante in his *Divina Commedia*, was employed by Shelley in his "Ode to the West Wind," which he wrote while he was living in Italy. This ode is one

<sup>89</sup> This test may be applied to other stanzas of *In Memoriam*, in which the third and fourth lines may be shifted (reversed) without any sacrifice in original meaning. See poem ii, stanza 1; poem xxvi, stanza 1, poem lvi, stanza 3, poem lxiv, stanzas 2, 4, 5; poem lxix, stanza 5, poem lxxi, stanza 4, poem lxxxiii, stanza 3; poem lxxxix, stanza 9; poem cvi, stanza 6. Or similarly transpose the first and second lines in poem xl, stanza 3; poem xlix, stanza 1; poem lxvii, stanza 3; poem lxxviii, stanza 2; poem lxxix, stanza 4; poem lxxxiii, stanza 1.

of the finest poetic utterances in English. The rime royal (a seven-line stanza riming *ababbcc*), used by Chaucer in *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Parlement of Foules*, was also employed by James I of Scotland in *The King's Quhair*—hence its name, but it should be called the Chaucer stanza. Shakespeare's "The Rape of Lucrece," and William Morris' "The Earthly Paradise," also, employed this stanza; but one of the most effective uses of it has been made recently by John Masefield in "Dauber," "The Widow in Bye Street," and "The Daffodil Fields." For the most part, however, these three special stanza forms seem not peculiarly suited for the expression of English ideas and emotions:<sup>40</sup> perhaps they are just a bit too artificially involved in rime scheme for the Nordic mind.

There is, however, one highly specialized form of stanza that yet needs to be considered, one that has been used frequently by some of our leading English poets. Not all the difficult and intricate stanza forms are of foreign borrowing. English, also, has genius in this direction. The crowning glory of English poetic technique, so far as stanza pattern is concerned, is the Spenserian stanza.<sup>41</sup> It is distinctively of

<sup>40</sup> Rime royal was also used by Chaucer's fifteenth-century imitators, Lydgate, Occleve, Hawes, Dunbar, and then Skelton and Barclay. Gascoigne, in his *Notes of Instruction* (1575) speaks of it as "a royll kynde of verse, serving best for grave discourses." And Puttenham, in his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) speaks of it as "the chiefe of our ancient proportions used by any rimer writing any thing of historical or grave poeme, as ye may see in Chaucer and Lydgate." (Arber Reprint, page 80.)

<sup>41</sup> An excellent study of the Spenserian stanza is in Corson's *A Primer of English Verse*, chapters vii, viii, ix. See also Alden's *English Verse*, pages 102-107; Lowell's "Essay on Spenser," *Works*, Volume IV; Beer's *English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, chapter iii; Edward Payson Morton's "The Spenserian Stanza before 1700," *Modern Philology*,

Spenser's own devising. It is not, as has been held, merely an Alexandrine added to Chaucer's *ababbcbc* pattern used in the "Monkes Tale." The organic effect of this stanza is quite different from anything that the Chaucer pattern plus an Alexandrine would provide. Nor is it an Alexandrine added to an ottava rima, for the rime scheme of the ottava rima's eight lines is *ab ab ab cc*, not *ababbcbc*, as accredited to Chaucer by Hughes and Wharton; whereas the first eight lines of the Spenserian stanza rime *ababbcbc*, and the Alexandrine is organically added to this. To Spenser must be accredited the invention of this stanza pattern. Spenser was not a "mere metrist"; he was a "great composer."

The Spenserian stanza when used at its best—and to date only Spenser has used it at its best—is one of the most musical, most compact, and most impressive stanzas in English. It is most apt in "lingering, loving, particularizing" moods. It is a nine-line stanza, eight lines of which are iambic pentameter and the last an iambic hexameter or Alexandrine. This strophe is one of the most compact and most integrally interwoven in its organization of all English stanzas. Actually this stanza organically consists of (1) two quatrains and (2) a long refrain effect in the last line. The last line has something of the effect of Shelley's last line in his stanza form of "To a Skylark" or in the last line of Swinburne's "Hertha." The two quatrains are by no means so individualized as they are in other stanzas made up of two quatrains. In the Spenserian stanza the two quatrains are very, very closely bound together in thought sequence and

IV, 639-654; and his "The Spenserian Stanza in the Eighteenth Century," *Modern Philology*, X, 365-391; Guest's *History of English Rhythms*, Volume II and Book IV, chapter vii; Schipper's *History of English Versification*, Part II, chapter vii.

in particular by the rime scheme, *abab + bcbc + c*. The two quatrains are structurally inseparable because of the common rime *b*. The subtle rimes and the melodious tone-color of Spenser's own stanzas make them the most musically poetic in our language, and for "picture" values, nothing in our literature surpasses Spenser's and Byron's use of it.<sup>42</sup> Akenside's "Virtuoso," Thomson's "Castle of Indolence," Shenstone's "The Schoolmistress," Keats's "Eve of St. Agnes," Shelley's *Adonais* and *The Revolt of Islam*, Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and Burns's *The Cotter's Saturday Night* employ the Spenserian stanza, but with less subtlety and felicity than Spenser's masterpiece. An excerpt from Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (Book I, Canto 1, stanzas xxxix-xli), in which he first used this stanza form, repays intensive study. Note the beautiful rhythm of the run-on lines and of the last long line—"a rhythmical zephyr"—in particular.

He, making speedy way through 'spersed air,  
 And through the world of waters wide and deep,  
 To Morpheus' house doth hastily repair,  
 Amid the bowels of the earth full steep,  
 And low, where dawning day doth never peep,  
 His dwelling is; there Tethys his wet bed  
 Doth ever wash, and Cynthia still doth steep  
 In silver dew his ever-drooping head,  
 Whiles sad Night over him her mantle black doth spread.

Whole double gates he findeth locked fast,  
 The one fair framed of burnished ivory,

<sup>42</sup> Reverend Joseph Spence's *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men* (1820), page 86, accredits Pope with having said this of Spenser.

The other all with silver overcast;  
And wakeful dogs before them far do lie,  
Watching to banish Care, their enemy,  
Who oft is wont to trouble gentle Sleep.  
By them the sprite doth pass in quietly,  
And unto Morpheus comes, whom drowned deep  
In drowsy fit he finds: of nothing he takes keep.

And more to lull him in his slumber soft,  
A trickling stream from high rock tumbling down,  
And ever-drizzling rain upon the loft,  
Mixed with a murmuring wind much like the soun'  
Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swoon.  
No other noise, nor people's troublous cries,  
As still are wont t' annoy the walled town,  
Might there be heard; but careless Quiet lies  
Wrapped in eternal silence far from enemies.

The messenger approaching to him spake;  
But his waste words returned to him in vain:  
So sound he slept that nought mought him awake.  
Then rudely he him thrust, and pushed with pain,  
Whereat he 'gan to stretch; but he again  
Shook him so hard that forced him to speak.  
As one then in a dream, whose drier brain  
Is tossed with troubled sights and fancies weak,  
He mumbled soft, but would not all his silence break.

"The normal English stanza," asserts Alden, "thus appears to be most naturally formed of four, six, or eight verses; and when we pass beyond this point to longer forms, we enter the field where individual artistic taste has ingeniously developed and elaborated the simpler and briefer stanza for particular purposes. A partial exception to this is

found in the nine-line stanza invented by Spenser, now always called the 'Spenserian,' which, although apparently devised by purely individual art for a particular work, has nevertheless been so freely and so beautifully used by later poets as to have become one of the standard strophic forms of English poetry. This stanza, riming *ababbcbcc*, is best regarded as an expansion of the eight-line stanza of the *ababbcbc* type, the first eight verses being always in five-stress meter, the additional verse in six-stress. Thus the concluding verse is linked by the rime to the preceding verses yet stands by itself with its individual lingering cadence, as a kind of conclusion and recapitulation of the entire stanza. The Spenserian stanza has always been used most characteristically for elaborated and sustained poetical narration and description in poems where attention is directed not entirely to the theme of the whole, but to the beauty of detail in the several parts; or, as one critic has phrased it, poems characterized by 'lingering, loving, particularizing mood.' "

Lowell, in his essay "On Spenser," says: "In the Alexandrine, the melody of one stanza seems forever longing and feeling forward after that which is to follow. There is no ebb and flow in his [Spenser's] meter more than on the shores of the Adriatic, but wave follows wave with equable gainings and recessions, the one sliding back in fluent music to be mingled with and carried forward by the next. In all this there is soothingness, indeed, but no slumberous monotony; for Spenser was no mere metrist, but a great composer. By the variety of his pauses—now at the close of the first or second foot, now of the third, and again of the fourth—he gives spirit and energy to a measure whose tendency it certainly is to become languorous. He knew how to make it rapid and passionate at need. . . ."

The highly formalized continental European forms—the triolet, the rondeau, the ballade, the sestina, the villanelle, the *pantoum* (Malaysian), and even the much-praised “Italian sonnet”—have not such subtlety to offer as the Spenserian stanza possesses. Seldom are rhythm, organic structure, rime, and tone-color employed in so happy an effect. One does well to devote patient study to this stanza form: doing so will enable him to understand and appreciate its subtleties—and then he can read it as it has been written, a quatrain plus a quatrain plus a rhythm-like long-line “refrain” at the close. And all organically molded into singleness of effect and artistic unity!

Good poetic composition, whether by amateur or professional, does not consist in conforming, like a fawning sycophant, to all the technical mechanics of verse; nor does it consist in obstinately ignoring the conventions of poetry. After all it is the poetry in the poem that makes it really a poem. All the mechanical accuracy in the world will not make a good poem out of a bad one. All the freedom from accepted conventions that one may exercise will not redeem a poem that is not essentially poetical. A real poet is not hoodwinked by unessentials. A sincere poet is first of all concerned with expressing and communicating his emotions and thoughts. For the nonce, he may not be very much concerned whether the result be (1) free verse, (2) irregular rimed verse, (3) blank verse, or (4) conventional verse in all its patterns. Often, of course, either because it is a bit natural to him or because he has acquired the habit of doing so, he readily falls into expressing his emotions and ideas in metrical and stanzaic form. Always, however, there are two things he must keep before him in the practice of poetic composition: if he would communicate himself effectively to his reader,



he must (1) express his feelings and ideas in rhythmical phrasing and (2) he must make his feelings and ideas manifest to his reader—he must be understood, else he will not be read; he must make himself clear! Obviously it needs no further argument or illustration to convince us that one of the most effective ways for a creative poet to communicate himself most clearly to us is by having organic pattern (1) in his poem as a whole, and (2) in his strophe and stanza form.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> It is not the purpose of this volume to analyze the so-called French forms nor to discuss the sonnet—Italian, Spenserian, Shakespearean types. However, any careful analysis will reveal that all these forms, the French form in particular, are based directly upon parallel repetition of either (1) a refrain or (2) a theme or (3) both. For illustration the triolet is but a refrain thrice repeated. only three lines out of eight are not refrain. Note:

Sweet roses of June,  
Your beauty enchants me,  
My heart is atune,  
Sweet roses of June,  
Atune to the rune  
Of the joy that you grant me,  
Sweet roses of June,  
Your beauty enchants me.

Those who wish to examine these French forms are referred to. Alden's *English Verse*, chapter vii, Cohen's *Lyric Forms from France* and *The Ballade*, Gleeson White's *Ballades and Rondeaux*, Swinburne's *A Century of Roundels*, Andrew Lang's *Lays and Lyrics from Old France*; J. Boulmier's *Les Villanelles*.


For the sonnet see: Tomlinson's *The Sonnet, Its Origin, Structure, and Place in Poetry*, Tomasso Casini's *Le Forme metriche italiane*, Gaspray's *Geschichte des italienischen Literatur*; W. L. Bullock's "The Genesis of the English Sonnet Form," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, Volume XXXVIII, No. 4; Pierre Villey's "Morat et la premier sonnet français" in *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, XXVII, 532-547, Alden's *English Verse*, chapter iv; Corson's *A Primer of English Verse*, chapter x.



## CHAPTER V

### METRICAL RHYTHM IN POETRY

#### THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF ENGLISH METER

N THE chapter on "The Organic Rhythm of a Poem" we pointed out that in poetry there was the organic rhythm (1) of the poem as a whole, (2) of the parts or divisions of a poem, (3) of groups of lines in the form usually of strophes or of organized stanzas, (4) of the individual line (frequently, though not always), (5) of the "speech group"<sup>1</sup> or phrase, and (6) of the word. Rhythm, we held, is a succession of involution of unities; that is, unities within unities—minor ones within major ones—all working in harmony with each other. Rhythm is both simplified and complex at one and the same time. To illustrate, we said that, in a certain line, three

<sup>1</sup> A most excellent and scholarly discussion of the rhythm of the "speech group" is in Edith Rickert's *New Methods for the Study of Literature*, chapter v, "Rhythm." See also Jacob's *The Foundations and Nature of Verse*, chapter xii, "The Phrase: Its Nature and Its Length," and chapter xiv, "The Structure of the Foot; Accent, Duration, etc."; and E. W. Scripture's *Grundzüge der Englischen Verswissenschaft* (1929).

grades of rhythms are perceptible and the "speech groups" stand out in rhythmic form.

Jolly mortals, fill your glasses; noble deeds are done by wine.

A number of our best students of English metrics<sup>2</sup> are inclined to halt at this point. They consider such speech grouping in terms of "centroids" (Scripture), or "points of support" (Whitmore), or "syllabic group phrases" (Skeat, Liddell), or "stress groups," and, in certain individual instances, further consider such rhythmic groups, under one title or another, as the basis of English meter. The more traditional point of view—largely the result of the influence of our grammarians of classical prosody, no doubt—is that our English meter is very definitely a more or less regular recurrence of alternating "accented" and "unaccented" or "long" and "short" syllables in a line. In any instance, the quotation we have been using, in addition to rhythm in (1) the line as a whole, in (2) the parts of the line, and in (3) the "speech groups," has rhythm also in (4) the words of which the passage is composed. Employing the conventional method of scansion, we would indicate the word rhythm thus:

Jol-ly | mor-tals, | fill your | glass-es, | no-ble | deeds are | done  
by | wine.

<sup>2</sup> Skeat's "Scansion of English Poetry," *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1895, pages 484-503, reprinted in his six-volume edition of Chaucer, I, lxxxii-xcvii; Scripture's *Elements of Experimental Phonetics*, and his *Grundzüge der Englischen Verswissenschaft*, Liddell's *An Introduction to the Scientific Study of Poetry*, and C. E. Whitmore's "A Proposed Compromise in Metrics," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, Vol. XLI, No. 4.

Whether these "accents" are of equal intensity, whether these syllables are "long" or "short," or whether "accenting the syllable makes the syllable long," as Saintsbury insists, is of little concern for the present. The fact is that there is a rhythm in the words themselves in addition to the other organic rhythms in the passage. For our convenience we shall call it organic *metrical*<sup>a</sup> *rhythm* as differentiated from the other organic rhythms.

<sup>a</sup> Standard treatises on English metrics are. Schipper's *Englische Metrik*, Book I, Parts I and II (in English translation, *A History of English Versification*, Book I, Parts I, III), Guest's *A History of English Rhythms*, Volumes I, II, Saintsbury's *A History of English Prosody*, Volume I (inclines to the conventional as opposed to Guest, Schipper, etc.), Kaluza's *Englische Metrik* (available in an English translation, by Dunstan, *A Short History of English Versification*), Paul's *Grundriss der Germanischen Philologie* (considers Old English [Sievers] and Middle English [Luick] prosodies), Verrier's *Essai sur les principes métriques anglais*, chapters 1-111 (rather conventional, like Saintsbury, but from a different angle).

Less extensive treatises are volumes of Omond, Mayor, Smith, Gummere, Alden, Bright, Liddell, Andrews, Matthews, Corson, and Lewis.

Actual laboratory research in the field of metrics is now forthcoming primarily from American scholars. Scripture's *Elements of Experimental Phonetics*, Jacob's *The Foundations and Nature of Verse*, Snell's "An Objective Study of Syllabic Quantity in English Verse" (two articles), *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXIII, 396 ff., and XXXIV, 416 ff., Hurst and McKay's "Experiments on Time Relations in Poetical Meters," *University of Toronto Studies*, No. 3 (1899), pages 57-75, Bolton's "Rhythm," *American Journal of Psychology*, VI, 2, Patterson's *The Rhythm of Prose*, Triplett and Sanford's "Studies of Rhythm and Meter," *American Journal of Psychology*, XII, 3, Woodrow's *A Quantitative Study of Rhythm* (Columbia University, 1909), Wallin's "Researches on the Rhythm of Speech," *Studies from the Yale Psychological Laboratory*, IX, 72, MacDougall's "The Structure of Simple Rhythm Forms," *Psychology Review*, Monograph Supplements, Volume IV, Whole No. 17 (January 1903), page 325. The most recent volume presenting English meter from the strictly laboratory experimental point

Our English language and our English literature, in their period of existence, have been subjected to foreign influences—Danish, Celtic, French, Latin, and, perhaps, a little Greek and Hebrew. Students of our language and our literature are agreed that the chief influence upon our native expression has been primarily from Latin-French sources. That influence, for the most part, they hold, obtained during the period 1050 to 1250, or in the two centuries following the Norman Conquest. During that time, we are to understand, our present metrical scheme was evolved. On one point, however, there is a very sharp disagreement by opposites. One group of prosodists, now headed by Saintsbury,<sup>4</sup> hold that our present English meter is distinctively of French-Latin borrowing, that our native Anglo-Saxon prosody no longer appears in our verse, and that indeed it was defunct and moribund even before the Norman Conquest. He holds that quantity is the basis of our present meter and that accenting a vowel makes it long. To Saintsbury, our English meter is really somewhat ultra-formal in its regularity. Professor James W. Bright,<sup>5</sup> late of Johns Hopkins University, shared this idea of the strictly regular recurrence of the ictus in verse even to wrenching it away from the logical, rhetorical, or speech stress. Opposed to this point of view is the one that, while there has been a somewhat definite French-Latin

of view is Professor E. W. Scripture's monumental work, *Grundzüge der Englischen Verswissenschaft* (1929).

<sup>4</sup> *History of English Prosody*, chapter i. Courthope and Legouis follow Saintsbury, and Verrier does likewise, but with a difference in point of approach to the subject.

<sup>5</sup> "Concerning Grammatical Ictus in English Verse," in Dr. Furnivall's *An English Miscellany*, 1901; and his "Proper Names in Old English," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XIV, 347 ff.

influence on our English meter, the fiber of our native prosody still manifests itself and that, after all, our present poetic expression continues to be essentially Anglo-Saxon in general prosodic plan. Guest and also Schipper,<sup>6</sup> with many followers, support this idea. Most of the discussions pro and con have centered about the nature of the poetic foot in English—whether based on accent or on quantity—and the end is not yet. And while the controversy continues, our experimental psychologists, in the laboratories, by various devices are demonstrating to us that perhaps we have made much ado about nothing; for the records show that poetic expression is fluid and that, in utterance, it does not seem to fit itself into the conventional strait-jacket of “poetic feet,” whether our conception of those feet be based on accent or on quantity. Our mechanical laws and rules seem to be all right for us prosodic grammarians who would scan every line according to rule, but they do not seem to be wholly operative when we read a poem as poetically as we can. “A single line [of verse],” says Professor Scripture, “is not made up of smaller units that can be marked off from each other. . . . No such divisions occur in the actually spoken sounds or no dividing points can be assigned in the tracing [i.e., in the laboratory tracing]. In fact there does not seem to be any system of feet that can be assigned to it or any form of such rhythm under which it can be classified.” For our immediate

<sup>6</sup> Guest, *A History of English Rhythms*, and Schipper, *A History of English Versification*.

<sup>7</sup> Scripture's *Elements of Experimental Phonetics*, pages 553–554; see also his *Grundzüge der Englischen Verswissenschaft* (1929), in which he presents the results of his recent laboratory experiments in support of this theory. This scholarly treatise “contradicts in every detail the usual teaching of English metrics.”

purpose we do not need to align ourselves with either camp or with any camp. All are agreed that before the Norman Conquest we did have Anglo-Saxon poetry written in its own peculiar accentual metrical form; and all are agreed that this Anglo-Saxon metrical form came into contact with a Latin-French metrical form. To understand each of these prosodies separately and to appreciate what prosodic form might result from the one influencing the other, we need to devote a little attention to two rather divergent and opposite—so most persons think—kinds of metrical schemes.

And first, our native Anglo-Saxon stock. What was its prosodic make-up? If our authorities on Anglo-Saxon prosody<sup>a</sup> are correct, the following were its organic characteristics: (1) accentual; (2) essentially consonantal rather than

<sup>a</sup> Standard treatises are Sievers' *Altgermanische Metrik* (Halle, 1893), an English translation of it by Professor Cook, a digest of it in Appendix II in Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, Kaluza's *Englische Metrik*, Section I, contains an excellent résumé of the several theories of German scholars (especially with regard to two-stress and four-stress lines in Anglo-Saxon), its English translation by Dunstan is *A Short History of English Versification*, Vigfusson and Powell's *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, I, 443 ff., Schipper's *Englische Metrik*, and its English translation, *History of English Versification*, of which Part I has excellent footnote bibliographies and chapter II has a résumé of theories, Guest's *A History of English Rhythms*, Volume I, Books I, IV, VII, and Volume II, Book III.

See William Ellery Leonard's two studies, "Beowulf and the Niebelungen Couplet" and "The Scansion of Middle English Alliterative Verse," in *The University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature*, for an entirely untraditional point of view about Anglo-Saxon prosody. Or see his Introduction to his own metrical translation of *Beowulf*. He holds that our meter of "Sing a Song of Six-Pence" is directly descended from the Anglo-Saxon meter of *Beowulf*, and his modernized version of *Beowulf* is in that meter. Professor E. W. Scribner's new (1929) *Grundzüge der Englischen Verswissenschaft* has some closing chapters on Old English and Middle English alliterative verse in the light of laboratory analysis.

vowelistic, as were classical Greek and Latin; (3) alliterative rather than assonant, as were classical Greek and Latin; (4) balanced lines (pendulum swing), each line definitely divided into two half-lines with a definite medial caesura separating them; (5) structurally alliterative (all initial vowels alliterated, holding together the two half-lines in an organic oneness); (6) "trochaic," in that the scheme was an accented syllable followed by one (or more) unaccented one; (7) four accents to each line; (8) unaccented syllables attached to the accented ones varied in number so that the number of syllables in an Anglo-Saxon line were fewer than eight or as many as twenty or more; (9) the four accents not of the same degree of intensity but varied according to the rhetorical value of the word; (10) substitution of equivalence groups instead of adherence to rigid syllabic or accentual uniformity (indeed there seems to have been no rigidly regular recurrence of accents as we understand it in modern English poetry), (11) line-lengths not uniform. Moreover it is thought that it was (12) not stanzaic, though some German scholars have insisted that they detect stanza units of four lines each in *Beowulf*; and it has been held that there was (13) no rime, though Professor Rankin, in an admirable and scholarly article,<sup>9</sup> has brought forth rather convincing evidence that there was rime in popular Anglo-Saxon poetry. The outstanding features of Anglo-Saxon verse are (1) its four accents; (2) its balanced two half-lines with its caesura pause, which was never sectional but always in the middle of its line; (3) its organic alliteration (consonants); and (4) its "trochaic" (falling) metrical movement. In the main,

<sup>9</sup> "Rhythm and Rime before the Norman Conquest," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXVI, 401-428. See also the Anglo-Saxon rhyming poem in Guest and in Saintsbury.



too, all Germanic or Nordic verse had these essential characteristics.

Let us see more definitely what this Anglo-Saxon metrical scheme looked and sounded like. From the *Battle of Maldon* (lines 312-313), one of the most vigorous poems in our early poetry reads:

*Hyge* sceal þē *heardra*, || *heorte* þē *cēnre*;  
*Mōd* sceal þē *māra*, || þē *ūre mægen* lýtlað

For those who may not understand Anglo-Saxon, a good translation is,

*Heart* must be *heener*, || *courage* the *hardier*;  
*Bolder* our *mood*, || as our *band* diminisheth.

Here, in the first line and in the second line, three of the accented syllables alliterate—two in the first half-line and one in the second half-line; thus: *Hyg-hear-heor* and *Mod-mar-mæg*. There are four accents to the line; organic alliteration binds the two balanced half-lines in each whole line into an entity; there is a distinct caesura pause in the middle of the line; the metrical movement is "trochaic." From our national epic, *Beowulf* (lines 217-218):

*Gewat* þa ofer *wægholm* || *winde* gefýsed  
*Flota* famigheals, || *fugle* geliehost.

*Went* then o'er the *wave*-sea, || by the *wind* favored  
The *floater* foamy necked, || to a *fowl* likest.

Or again from *Beowulf*:

*Swaese* gesiðas, *swa* he *selfa* bad,

which sounds much like a line from *Paradise Lost*:

*Strongly* to suffer and support our pains,

or like a line from our earlier *Piers Plowman*:

In a *somer season* when *softe* was the *sonne*.

And if we take an example from one of our finest Anglo-Saxon lyrics, "Deor's Lament" (it is in stanzas which have a refrain at the close), we shall see that Anglo-Saxon verse was pretty definitely fixed so far as the three or four fundamentals are concerned.

þæt ic by me sylfum || *se*gan wille,  
 þæt ic hwile wæs || *He*odeninga scôp,  
*dryhtne* *dyre*: || me wæs *Deor* noma.  
 Ahte ic fela wintra || *folgað* tilne,  
*holdne* *hlaford*, || oþ þæt *Heorrenda* nu,  
*leoð*cræftig monn || *londright* geðah,  
 þæt me *eorla* hleo || ær gesealde.  
 þæs ofercode, || þisses swa maeg!

Professor Gummere, retaining something of the metrical scheme of the original, has given us an acceptable translation.

To say of myself || the story now,  
 I was singer erewhile || to sons-of-Heoden,  
 dear to my master, || *Deor* was my name,  
 Long were the winters || my lord was kind;  
 I was happy with clansmen, || till *Heorrenda* now  
 By grace of his lays || has gained the land  
 Which the haven-of-heroes || erewhile gave me.  
 That he surmounted. || so *this* may I.

Note again that the passage (1) is accentual; (2) is organically alliterative; (3) has lines of two balanced half-lines separated by a definite caesura; (4) is "trochaic" in metrical effect. Metrically it runs true to type.

Just how far this harshly accentual, consonantal, and alliterative verse is to be traced to the effect of the northern

rigorous climate in which our Anglo-Saxon forefathers lived, we cannot definitely say. Nor can we more than suggest that the balanced half-lines and the four recurrent stresses (usually three of which are alliterated), two in each half-line, were developed partly through the fact that the old scôp chanted his lays by swaying his body, now to the right and now to the left (this would make for rhythmic pendulum movement), and by accompaniment of a harp whose strings he vigorously plucked. To us their verse, may be lacking in melody; and it may be harsh, jumpy, and sometimes as hard as nails, as was all Nordic verse. It may have been shouted in a sort of haltingly impetuous recitative, as some scholars have held, when the old scôp in the mead hall cried out (*Beowulf*, lines 18-19):

*Bēowulf* wæs brēme, || —blāð wide sprang—  
*Scyldes eafra* || *scede*-landum in.

*Famed* was this *Beowulf*. || *far flew* the *boast* of him,  
*Scyldes' son* || in the *Scandian* lands.

From such vigorously and harshly alliterated accented syllables, with the caesural pauses and balanced half-lines, to such smooth and easy lines as Poe's

It was many and many a year ago,  
 In a kingdom by the sea,  
 That a maiden there lived whom you may know,  
 By the name of Annabel Lee

is a far cry. And though Courthope says that "between the poetry produced in England before the Norman Conquest and the poetry of Chaucer there is absolutely no link of connection,"<sup>10</sup> and though Saintsbury declares: "These feet,

<sup>10</sup> Courthope's *History of English Poetry*, I, 4.

we admit—nay, we voluntarily and vigorously assert—did not exist in Anglo-Saxon. But they existed notoriously in classical prosody, and they really exist in French, though the rigid syllabic quality of that language, its tendency to rhetorical emphasis instead of poetical measure, and its peculiar *atony*, obscure them,”<sup>11</sup> and though he adds: “But with the music of our poetry it [Anglo-Saxon verse] has little more to do than the strummings of a child have to do with a finished symphony,”<sup>11</sup> we need not, for the present, take issue with them.

On the other hand, that vigorous, harsh, and angular (if really we understand its metrical plan) Anglo-Saxon verse was an organic medium aptly fitted to express the vigorous, harsh, and angular spirit of our earliest forefathers. It was both the weave and the woof of their very existence in that cold northern clime. Courageously and ardently they welcomed the struggle of life. When they spoke, their few words and ejaculations carried weight. They pounded and drove them home, as it were, by direct vocal expression, emphasized, we may believe, by vigorous gesture. “In the northern economy of verse,” says Ernest Rhys, “we recognize that words counted by weight, not by scale. The scôp weighed his words; and used them vehemently (as Scherer suggests), but did not lengthen out his syllables, as we do. So when we try to read Caedmon, we seem at best to distinguish a rude plucking of the strings for emphasis at the dominant words. Indeed, the modern reader, unused to Old English, may be forcibly reminded of this vigor by the twenty-eighth riddle in the *Exeter Book*:

My head is || with a hammer beaten;

With war-darts wounded || rubbed with a rasp.

<sup>11</sup> Saintsbury's *History of English Prosody*, I, 82, 72.

"But, in fact there is an organic consistency in this northern verse; the sense and the sound alike tend to throw the accent on the same word or syllable of the line. This gave to it strength and directness, at least, if not the pliancy it obtained afterwards from its commerce with the Latin and Celtic tongues."<sup>12</sup>

Despite Saintsbury's saying that Anglo-Saxon meter, even before the Norman Conquest, "had no status," the fact remains that tenth-century manuscripts of our old Anglo-Saxon poems (composed much earlier, of course) show that the Anglo-Saxon metrical scheme was very formal and almost fossilized in rigidity of structure. Even a casual examination of the *Beowulf* or of the *Exeter Book* material will reveal this. The monkish scribes, at least, detected a definite formal metrical pattern, as their consistent and persistent use thereof in their manuscripts shows. Nor are these manuscripts "only débris" of our Anglo-Saxon poetry. It is hard to conjecture just what might be our evaluation of Anglo-Saxon poetry if there were suddenly presented for our study all the material believed lost in the ruthless destruction of the monasteries—golden treasure-houses—in England. To understand whether or not Anglo-Saxon verse was influenced by Latin verse and, if so, in what way, we need to know something about Latin verse. And to Latin poetry we turn our attention.

Our first concern must be with classical Latin. What, in contrast to Anglo-Saxon meter, were the characteristics of its prosodic plan? But in our approach to classical Latin poetry, let us keep in mind that classical Latin poetry, in essentials of prosody, was somewhat different from popular

<sup>12</sup> Rhys's *Lyric Poetry*, page 17.

Latin poetry. Classical Latin poetry, from Virgil to Claudian, was the product primarily of Latin poetry subject to the rules of prosody formulated by the meticulous prosodic Latin grammarians from what they thought were the rules of Greek prosody and Greek poetic practice. Having a genius for schematic organization, the Latin grammarians reduced both Greek and Latin prosody to very definite precepts, by which today, in our schools, we continue to attempt to scan Latin verse. If our authorities<sup>18</sup> on Latin prosody are correct, then classical Latin verse (1) was quantitative as opposed to the accentual element in Anglo-Saxon; (2) was assonant (vowels), but not schematically so, as opposed to schematic alliterative (consonants) in Anglo-Saxon; (3) had a caesura pause that metrically divided the line but not in the organic balanced two-half-lines fashion of Anglo-Saxon; (4) was "dactylic" and "trochaic" in effect, but having also numerous other poetic "feet"; (5) had long and short syllables recurring in a pretty rigid way; (6) exhibited substitution of equivalence feet under definite rules; (7) had line-lengths somewhat uniform; (8) had no more or less loose short (quantitative) syllables, "left," as in Anglo-Saxon, "in some measure, as it were, to take care of themselves," as Guest expresses it. In a word, classical Latin verse was quantitatively regular according to pretty insistent rules. Strophe forms tended to appear; but rime, though present in Church Latin as we shall see, did not appear as a

<sup>18</sup> Standard works are Schmidt's *Introduction to the Rhythmic and Metric of the Classical Languages*, translated into English by Professor J. W. White, Boston, 1878; Westphal's *Metrik der Griechen*, Bahr's *Geschichte der römischen Litteratur*, Volumes I, II, III, and works of similar title by Teuffel and by Munch; Westphal's *Ueber die Formen der ältesten römischen Poesie*.

prevailing element in classical Latin. The whole classical Latin prosodic scheme seems relatively so exacting and so artificial that one wonders whether either Latin or Greek verse was ever really composed after the fashion; that is, whether or not accent did not play more of a part in their language than the meticulous prosodic Latin grammarians have led us to understand. Professor William Ross Hardie,<sup>14</sup> voicing our query, says he is convinced that Greek meter supplied the norm of meter for the classical languages but is not inclined to accept what the Latin grammarians have said about it. The question is not whether Professor Hardie's misgivings are correct; the fact is that when today we speak of Latin poetry and Latin prosody we understand it to have been just what these grammarians have stated that it was. Usually when we speak of Latin metrical influence on English meter, we mean this regular and systematic quantitative pattern in classical Latin poetry.

No metrical system is in practice ever wholly mechanical, despite the tendency of all artistic expression to develop into seemingly artificial conventions and despite the grammarians having reduced all to a schematic order as in the instance of the Latin prosodists. Investigation of the several well-known schemes of meter shows that metrical notation really has its origin in the very nature of the oral expression itself, in the very genius of the spoken language. The Greek tongue, in its series of vowels with associated consonants, was seemingly characterized by a delicate yet strong musical tone, one in which quantity, or duration of vowel sound, was an important characteristic. Whether or not the Greeks so employed them, the Latin grammarians held that Greek

<sup>14</sup> "What Is Meter?" in *Proceedings of the Classical Association of Scotland*, 1913.

vowels were either long or short; that is, in pronunciation a long vowel theoretically was prolonged just twice as long as a short vowel and vice versa. The short vowels might be aptly represented by a *one*-inch length of a two-inch gas pipe and a long vowel by a *two*-inch length of the same gas pipe; that is, the ratio was exactly 1 to 2. This means that there was an easily recognizable prolongation of the duration of a long vowel when pronounced and an easily recognizable shortening of the duration of a short vowel when pronounced. This plan, in Greek verse, so the Latin grammarians held, seems to have been observed with some degree of exactness; indeed there appears to have been but one correct way of reading a given line of classical Greek poetry—if the metrical rhetoricians have given us a reliable account of the pattern. This schematic plan of regular quantity the Latin prosodists applied to Greek verse, and also foisted it upon their own Latin verse.

Thus a line of Greek poetry when read by a cultured Athenian seems to have been what to us would be a sort of musical monotone utterance, with modulations, of course, of a regular sequence of alternating long and short vowels with their associated consonants. The vowels, it seems, were emphasized and not the consonants, with the result that musical assonance was perhaps a notable characteristic of Greek poetry when orally rendered. It may well be held that we English (Anglo-Saxon), linguistically educated to accent rather than to quantity, are utterly unable to read quantitatively a line of Greek poetry! However, the energy expended in attempting to read a bit of Greek verse quantitatively is well worth while. After a little practice, best results will accrue if, in reading, we will religiously see to it that we *do not accent the long vowels* as we shall be



inclined to do, and that we *prolong the duration of the long and the short musical vowel sounds in ratio of two to one*. Homer begins his *Iliad*:

Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεῖα, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος,  
οὐλομένην, ἣ | μυρῖ' Ἀχαιοῖς | ἄλγε' ἔθηκεν,  
πολλὰς | δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἀτρεΐδου προΐαψεν  
ἥρωων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἑλώρια | τεύχε κύπεσσιν  
οἶω νοῖσὶ τε | πᾶσι, Διὸς δ' ἔτελεετο | βουλῇ,  
ἔξ οὗ | δὴ τὰ | πρῶτα δι' αὖσθητην ἐρίσαντε  
Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ | δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

And when Virgil, under the influence of Latin prosodists, wrote his *Aeneid*, he adjusted his sonorous Latin vowels to the scheme of alternating long and short quantity and put the whole into a pattern of definite metrical line-lengths. He opens his *Aeneid*:

Arma vi|rumque ca|no, || Tro|jae qui | primus ab | oris  
Itali|am, fa|to profu|gus, || La|vinaque | venit  
litora, | mult<sup>um</sup> il|l<sup>e</sup> et ter|ris || iac|tatus et | alto  
vi supe|rum, || sae|vae memo|rem Iu|nonis ob | iram,  
Multa quo|qu<sup>e</sup> et bel|lo pas|sus, || dum | conderet | urbem,  
infer|retque de|os Lati|o, || genus | unde La|tinum  
Alba|nique pa|tres || at|qu<sup>e</sup> altae | moenia Romae.

Even one who is not well acquainted with Greek and Latin verse readily detects in these examples: (1) liquid music in Greek and sonorousness in the Latin; (2) regular quantity in the metrical pattern; (3) a caesura pause in each line; (4) "dactylic-trochaic" (falling rhythm) effect; (5) rather even line-lengths (no loose and floating syllables). In a word, there is schematic regularity on the basis of quantity in long and short syllables. Note, however, that neither rime nor organized stanzas are present.

Now the genius of our mother tongue, Anglo-Saxon, was, in the light of the grammarians, not at all like that of the Greek or of the Latin. Seemingly it was the consonants in our Old English poetry that were emphasized instead of the vowels as in the Greek. It has been held that the early Greek poetry developed its early metrical notation of quantity because of its having been composed and sung to the soft-sounding lute, on which musical effect was obtained by prolonged and shortened sounds; whereas the Anglo-Saxon scheme of accented consonants developed because early Anglo-Saxon verse was composed and recited to a rude harp, as we have suggested, on which the effect of stress was obtained by vigorously plucking the strings. Moreover, ancient Greece had a mild and soothing climate, while Scandinavia had a cold and vigorous climate. Be that as it may, our English metrical scheme, for the most part, is based upon accent of the consonants and associated vowels. Just as the ancient Greek prolonged the duration of sound of his long vowels, so the old Anglo-Saxon accented his consonants. As a result, Greek poetry was somewhat assonant, Anglo-Saxon poetry was strongly alliterative. In any instance, Anglo-Saxon verse was written accentually; and classical Latin, quantitatively.

Now our problem of Latin prosodic influence on English might be a somewhat simplified one if the Latin metrical influence on old Anglo-Saxon meter had been that of classical Latin. But the fact is that classical Latin, so our historians and scholars<sup>15</sup> hold, is not the Latin that obtained in the Church and in Western Europe. The early Christian Church, until Constantine made it the state religion of the Roman Empire in 324, was not the faith of the élite and of those in royal position but the faith of the few among the masses who used, not classical Latin, but popular Latin. Moreover, the early Church was hostile to much represented in classical Latin, for the reason that the gods of its mythology were pagan and early Christianity was the foe of all things pagan. That this hostility obtained for long in the Church is evidenced by even a casual reading of literature as late as that of the legends of the saints and the metrical romances as they appear in English and French versions. Then, too, the Church, though systematically organized after the fashion of the genius for organization of the Latin race, was propagated among the masses in Western Europe, where, evidence shows, the Church again and again appropriated to its use such of local prevailing religious (pagan) materials and conditions as would not too strongly conflict with the principles and beliefs of the new faith. The Latin familiar to the masses in Western Europe was not classical Latin but popular Latin. For the most part, popular Latin was the Latin used in the hymns and service of the Church, for the aim of the early fathers was to make the masses understand the faith. If, then, Latin verse had influence on

<sup>15</sup> See Dondo's "Vers Libre" in *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXIV, 189-202. The works of Saintsbury, Courthope, Guest, Schipper, Kaluza, etc., already cited, make this point clear.

Anglo-Saxon verse—and all are agreed that it did exert some influence—we cannot well look to classical Latin for the major part of that influence. Indeed we are obliged to look more to popular Latin poetry.

It is in the Latin hymns of the Church and in the Old French pagan carols<sup>16</sup> that, for the most part, we are to find the more definite foreign influence on English meter. From the extant manuscript materials of Latin hymns and French carols we can infer that there were hundreds of such songs and poems copied and recopied again and again. They were the common possession of high and low alike. Many of the popular Latin Church hymns were patterned directly upon the prevalent old French carols. And both popular Latin hymns and the French carols are accentual and not quantitative in meter. It is well known to students of Latin that popular Latin was always accentual, whatever may have been the quantitative nature of literary classical Latin from Virgil to Claudian. Thus Suetonius reports that the following accentual Latin verses were sung by the soldiers of Julius Caesar:

Caesar Gallias subegit, Nicomedes Caesarem,  
Ecce Caesar nunc triumphant, qui seugit gallias.  
Nicomedes non triumphant, qui subegit Caesarem.

<sup>16</sup> For Latin hymns, see Mone's *Latemische Hymnen des Mittelalters*, Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, Daniel's *Thesaurus Hymnologicus*; Meyer's *Romana*, Drevès' *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, the Notes (pages 241–288) in Carleton Brown's *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century* are excellent and scholarly.

For carols, etc., see Rickert's *Ancient English Carols, 1100–1300*, Weston's *Old English Carols*, Wright's *Songs and Carols from a MS in the British Museum*, Wharton Club; Chambers and Sedgwick's *Early English Lyrics, Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, Early Elizabethan Text Society, revised edition; Bøddeker's *Alt-Englische Dichtungen des MS. Harleian 2253* (1878).

We are told that after the wane of classical (quantitative) Latin the tendency was to return to the more normal and more natural popular (accentual) Latin. The French carols, so our authorities like Gaston Paris<sup>17</sup> and others hold, were really old pagan religious dances accompanied by song—long before the introduction of Christianity—in the yearly outdoor nature games primarily at Easter (pagan originally) and May-time. These nature festivals, which were purely pagan, were termed *caroles*, a word that signifies a dance to the accompaniment of song. These *caroles*, sung and danced in their earlier stages by women and maidens (on tiptoe, perhaps, for they are light, tripping, and regular in their movement), have a well-defined regularity of metrical stress. It is highly probable that their regularity and evenness of intensity of recurrent stresses in the line were the result of the regularity and evenness of intensity of stress in the light dancing on tiptoe. To the metrical movement of these accentual pagan old French carols, the accentual popular Latin of the Church rather easily adapted itself: a Christian Church readily employed a pagan device to forward its spiritual work.

Let us examine, via some examples, these popular Latin Church hymns as they appear in the French pagan carol form. That these Latin hymns obtained in pretty much all Christendom in Western Europe is evidenced by the fact that many such Latin hymns are found in manuscripts of early England. The following is the refrain from a Latin "carol" Church hymn in the "Hill MS" in Balliol College, Oxford:

<sup>17</sup> Paris' *La Poésie du moyen âge*, deuxième série (Paris, 1896); Brakleemann's *Les plus anciens chansonniers français* (Paris, 1891).

Mater, ora filium,  
 Ut post hoc exilium  
 Nobis donet gaudium  
 Beatorum omnium!

This (1) is accentual and not quantitative; (2) is regular in the recurrence of accent; (3) has rime; (4) has lines even in length; (5) has an even chant-like sonorousness; (6) is "trochaic." Surely this sounds but little like Virgil's quantitative

Arma vir|umque ca|no, Tro|iae qui | primus ab | oris.

One of the very oldest forms of sacred song is the "Noel" attendant upon the Christmas time. Often these are a sort of lullaby song. Here is one of the best-known Latin ones:

Dormi, fili dormi! mater  
 Cantat unigenito:  
 Dormi puer, dormi! pater  
 Nato clamat parvulo.  
 Millies tibi laudes canimus  
 Mille, mille, millies.

Again, this popular Latin hymn is (1) accentual, (2) regularly metrical, (3) rimed, (4) even-lined, (5) sonorous, and (6) "trochaic." While it would be contrary to fact to hold that during this period no quantitative Latin poetry was composed in Western Europe, still what influenced English verse most was this popular carol accentual kind.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Other examples of Latin Church accentual carol hymns may be named. Celano's "*Dies Irae*," with Jocopone's "*Stabat Mater*," was considered the most nearly perfect Latin hymn of the Church. It ran—

Dies irae, dies illa  
 Solvet saeculum in favilla, etc.

Adam de Saint Victor's—he was perhaps a lay cleric and a Breton monk

Naturally when the Latin Church hymns and the French carols came into contact with English poetry this same "trochaic" metrical effect should appear. And so it does, for

in the abbey founded by Guillaume de Champeaux—"Stella Maris" poem is one of the most beautiful sung in the choirs of the Medieval Church.

Ave, Virgo singularis,  
Mater nostri salutaris  
Quae vocaris Stella Maris  
Stella non erratica  
Nos in hujus vitae mari  
Non permittite naufragari  
Sed pro nobis salutar  
Tuo semper supplica.

The well-known "*Virgo Gaude Speciosa*" began thus

Hic ignotus apud patrem  
nobis natus fit per matrem,  
noster ergo factus frater  
per te, virgo, facta mater.

Sedulius (ca. A.D. 400) wrote one which Kaluza (p. 145) accents as follows.

A solis ortus cardine  
Adusque terrae litem  
Christum canamus principem  
Natum Maria virgine.

From the French carols comes "*Seignors, Ore Entendez à Nus*".

Seignors, ore entendez à nus,  
De loinz sumes venuz à wous,  
Pur quere Noel;  
Car l'em nus dit que en cest hostel  
Soleit tenir sa feste anuel,  
Ahi, cest jur.  
Deu doint à tuz icels joie d'amours,  
Qui a Danz Noel ferunt honors!

At Mainz, on Mayday, two girls sang the following refrain from an

Anglo-Saxon verse also was "trochaic" in metrical movement. One of these fine English Maytime French carol poems appears inserted in the long poem, *Arthour and Merlin* (ca. 1300). Its lilting, tripping effect is at once noticeable. Noticeably present are (1) accent, (2) regular recurrence of accent, (3) even line-lengths, (4) rime, (5) musical sonorousness, etc. And it is "trochaic."

Miri time it is in May,  
 Than wexeth along the day,  
 Floures shewen her borioun [beds],  
 Miri it is in feld & town,  
 Foules miri in wode gredeth [calleth],  
 Damisels carols ledeth.

Another of such English carol poems is one dealing with the traditional strife between the holly and the ivy—a theme of frequent recurrence in Middle English lyrics:

Holly bereth beris  
 Beris red enough;  
 The thrilcock, the popinjay  
 Daunce in every bough.

old French carol. In time there were carols on love, hunting, welcoming, dancing, etc. Note the lyrical refrain

Tout la gieus sor rive mer,  
 Campaignon, or dou chanter,  
 Dames i out bauz levez.  
 Mont en ai le cuer gai.  
 Campaignon, or dou chanter  
 En l'onor de mai.



Well away, sory Ivy!  
What fowles hast thou,  
But the sory howlet  
That singeth "how how."

Another such song is a Christmas welcome song—a jovial welcome, too:

Let no man cum into this hall;  
Grome, page, nor yet marshall,  
But that sum sport he bring us all  
For now it is the time of Christmas.

It will be noted that this poem is not "trochaic" but rather "iambic" in metrical movement, as is also the familiar song of the chase—a remnant of the rite of bringing in the dead boar's head:

The boris hede in hondes I bringe,  
With garlondes gay and birdes singinge,  
I pray you all, helpe me to singe  
*Qui estis in convivio.*

The Latin refrain here, accentually, is made to fit into the "iambic" metrical scheme of the English lines. This fitting-in of the Latin into the regular English metrical scheme is significant: it shows something of the stability of the native English.

Naturally, if the "trochaic" metrical movement of popular Latin and French songs apparently so easily fitted into the "trochaic" metrical movement of the Anglo-Saxon, we should find a good deal of macaronic verse in English. By macaronic verse we mean that in which some lines are in English and some are in Latin or in French—usually the refrain effect—with the same meter obtaining in both. This

is precisely what we do find. The very familiar "A Hymn to the Virgin" is in alternate lines of English and Latin, with both groups of lines accentually regularly "trochaic." One stanza is this:

Of on that is so fayr and bright  
*Velut maris stella,*  
 Brighter than the day is light,  
*Parens et puella:*  
 Ic crie to the, thou see to me,  
 Levedy, preye thi Sone to me,  
*tam pia,*  
 That ic mote come to thee  
*Maria.*

Another macaronic poem is the "A Song of the Nativity," which runs:

"*Gloria in excelsis deo,*"  
 For thei songen þus,  
 "& *in terra,*" þei songen al so,  
 "With *pax hominibus.*"

Of French interspersed with English, we have in a Harleian MS, 2253, folio 83a, an interesting macaronic poem in which again all the lines are in the same regular accentual "trochaic" meter.

Maiden moder milde,  
*oiez cel oreysoun,*  
 from shame þou me shilde,  
*o de ly malfeloun.*  
 for love of þine childe  
*me menez de tresoun:*  
 Ich wes wod & wilde,  
*ore su en prisoun.*

The many, many accentual Latin refrains appearing in so many of our early Middle English poems—refrains like "*Mane nobiscum, domine*," "*Parce michi domini*," "*Deo Gracias*," "*Quia amore langueo*," "*Et nobis Puer natus est*," "*Filius Regis mortuus est*," "*Salve, Sancta Parens*," "*Timor mortis conturbat me*"—in practically every instance are found to fit regularly into the metrical scheme of the English poem. If we turn to the "*Esto Memor Mortis*," in a manuscript in Cambridge University library, we shall see a poem of balanced lines, one-half of which are English and the other half are Latin.

Syth alle þat in þys worlde haþ been || *in rerum natura*,  
 Or in þys wyde worlde was seen || *in humana cura*,  
 Alle schalle posse wyþ-outen ween || *via mortis dura*;  
 God graunte þat mannys soule be cleen || *penas non passura*.  
 When þow leste wenys, || *venit mors te superare*  
 þus þy graue grenys, || *ergo mortis memorare*.

Perhaps we might well argue that this arrangement of two-part balanced lines is, after all, only the same effect that we should get if we printed "A Hymn to the Virgin" in long lines, thus:

Of on that is so fayr and bright || *velut maris stella*,  
 Brighter than the day is light, || *parens et puella*.

Be that as it may, the significant thing is that both the English and the Latin are in "trochaic" meter, both are accentual, and there is a sense of pendulum swing or balance between the two halves of the line. Moreover, there is a mass of evidence, in our macaronic verse, that Church accentual Latin and the accentual French of the carols each readily moulded itself to the accentual Anglo-Saxon or the early Middle English rather than vice versa.

We may now rightly ask just what effect this accentual Latin and French has had on English meter? What change has actually taken place in the Anglo-Saxon meter as a result of Latin-French influence through carols and Latin Church hymns? One point, seemingly, can be settled at once: since the Anglo-Saxon tended to be "trochaic" and since the carols and popular Latin also tended to be "trochaic," we should expect our early Middle English poems to be somewhat "trochaic." And they are trochaic! (Why modern English poetry is very largely "iambic" we shall make clear in due time.) In the second place, popular Latin and French carol-hymns were accentual—not quantitative—and so was Anglo-Saxon. We should expect, then, to find the early Middle English poems to be accentual. And they are accentual! Indeed our English verse today, as we shall see, continues to be essentially accentual. In the third place, the recurrence of alternating accented and unaccented syllables in the Latin and French carol-hymns is rather definitely regular, whereas in Anglo-Saxon this recurrence does not seem to have been regular. Here, then, there may have been a very important influence. In Latin and in French not only did the accents recur in regular order but, in Latin and in French, these accents were rather more uniform in degree of intensity; whereas in Anglo-Saxon there was a rather large variation in degree of intensity. We should expect, as a result of Latin and French carol-hymn influence, that the irregular degree of intensity of accent in Anglo-Saxon verse should become more regular in degree of intensity of accent. The early Middle English poems are more regular in degree of intensity of accent than was Anglo-Saxon verse! However, they do not have quite so uniform a degree of intensity of accent as the Latin and French materials had. Nor are the

accents in English poetry of today regularly even in degree of intensity of accent; indeed, there is considerable variation in modern English poetry in this aspect of our verse, as we shall see later.

For the moment, then, we may say that the chief effect of Latin and French on Anglo-Saxon verse was not (1) to make it "trochaic," not (2) to make it accentual, for Anglo-Saxon verse was already those things. The chief effect seems to have been that the more even regularity of the accents in Latin and French tended to make much more regular the Anglo-Saxon degree of accents; that is, the Anglo-Saxon irregular accents were toned up and toned down. This toning up and toning down was further enhanced by at least two important factors: one was the sonorousness of the Latin and the musical Latin chants in the Church service. In Latin, as we have seen, it was the vowels rather than the consonants (as in Anglo-Saxon) that were the more emphasized. This sonorous effect of the Latin hymns would go far toward toning up and toning down the harsher, somewhat irregular consonantal effects in the Anglo-Saxon. Moreover, the chant-like effect, in which most of the Latin phrasing in the several services of the Church was given, would again go far toward making more even the recurring accents in English verse. We need but to re-read the sonorous Latin Church hymns and to listen to the Latin chant of the High Mass service today to see and feel the mellowing influence that these would naturally have when they influenced the harshly alliterative and irregularly accented Anglo-Saxon verse.<sup>19</sup> And when, a little later, our verse came into contact

<sup>19</sup> The following are discussions of modifications in Anglo-Saxon as a result of foreign influences. Saintsbury's *A History of English Prosody*, Volume I; Kaluza's *A Short History of English Versification*, Section II,

with our more modern French, with its even syllabic lines, in which, practically, there is little accent and likewise little quantity, the effect would be only to tend to make still smoother the irregularity of our native English meter in degree of intensity of accent.

There still remain two very important aspects of our English verse. In Latin and in French, regularly recurrent in accent as they were, there was a tendency to have the same number of syllables in lines of the same length. In Anglo-Saxon, in addition to the usual four accented syllables in each line, there were often many "loose syllables that seemingly were uncared for" in the metrical scheme. In our English poetry of today, however, there is such a relative sameness in number of syllables in lines of the same length. Moreover, in modern English poetry, perhaps more than ninety per cent of our verse is "iambic." How our English verse has come to be (1) regular and not irregular in the number of syllables to the line and how it has come to be (2) "iambic" instead of remaining essentially "trochaic" in metrical movement needs special consideration. We shall see that these two changes have come about primarily because of fundamental changes in our language—organic changes.<sup>20</sup>

Guest's *A History of English Rhythms*, Volume I, Books III and VI; Schipper's *History of English Versification*, chapters V, VI, VII, Courthope's *A History of English Poetry*, Volume I; and Lewis' *Foreign Sources of English Versification*.

<sup>20</sup> For organic changes in the English language, see: Schipper's *History of English Versification*, chapter VIII; Guest's *History of English Rhythms*, I, 24 ff.; Saintsbury's *A History of English Prosody*, Volume I; Emerson's *History of the English Language*, Jespersen's *The Growth and Development of the English Language* and *A Modern English Grammar*; Skeat's *Principles of English Etymology*, Wild's *The Historical Study of the Mother Tongue*.

Our scholars who have made a specialty of linguistic change in English are pretty much agreed that very vital and organic changes were already taking place in our mother tongue even before the Norman Conquest. French influence subsequent to the Conquest, so they hold, tended to expedite the mutation that was already taking place in our mother tongue. These organic changes were in terms of modifications (1) in pronunciation, (2) in word forms, and (3) in means of indicating grammatical relations. With the gradual relinquishment of the final endings in a good many Anglo-Saxon nouns—soon to be enhanced, let us say, by French influence—the Anglo-Saxon *nosu* became *nosè* and then finally “nose” (mute *e*); *lufu* became *lufè* and then “love” (mute *e*); *wodu* became *wodè* and finally “wood.” In passing it should be noted that such words, originally metrically speaking, were “trochaic.” Thus *strengthu* became “strength”; *scalu*, “scale”; *rosa*, “rose”; *mona*, “moon”; *sceamu*, “shame”; *tima*, “time”; *nama*, “name”; *muta*, “mouth”; *scipu*, “ship”; *hearte*, “heart”; *heafod*, “head”; *helle*, “hell”; and *leohte*, “light.” Among adjectives and adverbs, *mildè* became “mild”; *softè*, “soft”; *thrida*, “third”; *thonnè*, “then”; *thonan*, “thence”; *fastè*, “fast”; *firstè*, “first”; *grete*, “great”; *highè*, “high”; *richè*, “rich”; and *fayrè*, “fair.” Foreign words, too, had their accents shifted and sometimes their final syllables dropped: thus *Cu pid'o* became “Cu'pid”; *Sa tur'nus*, “Sat'urn”; *Vul ca'nus*, “Vul'can”; *so lem'pne*, “sol'emn”; *kind nesse'*, “kind'ness”; *phi lo so phie'*, “phi los'o phy”; *ci tee'*, “cit'y”; *ac cep ta'ble*, “ac cept'a ble”; *na tion'* (OF-*cion*), “na'tion”; *coun te-naunce'*, “coun'te nance.” Among infinitives, the Anglo-Saxon *bi'dan* became “(to) bide”; *bre'can*, “break”; *bu'gan*, “bend”; *gif'an* “give”; *sen'dan*, “send”; *cum'man*, “come”;

*ir'nan*, "run"; *fe'al lan*, "fall"; *set'tan*, "set"; *lim'pan*, "limp." Moreover, the many endings of the genitive case of nouns were gradually dropped: thus *mannes hond* became "man's hand"; *daeges eage* became "day's eye" ("daisy"), and so forth. And among verbs, practically all the conjugational person and number endings disappeared, until today about the only one left is the third person singular. Thus: *Ic help*, *thu helpst*, *he* or *she* or *it helpth* and *we* or *you* or *they helpath* became "I, you, we, they *help*" and "he, she, it *helps*." This organic change in our word forms, we need scarcely observe, tended to set free and thus remove many of those "free syllables unaccounted for in the Anglo-Saxon metrical scheme," so that, necessarily, there would appear a greater regularity of number of syllables in the lines of early Middle English verse. It should be noted that most of these syllables are the unaccented ones, the very ones that often were the "free and seemingly unattached" ones in Anglo-Saxon verse. Floaters, they were. We may suggest that this organic change went far to make the number of syllables more uniform in the lines of the same length, and that not all the credit for a change is to be accorded Latin and French influence. Any comparative examination of Anglo-Saxon word forms or of grammatical forms and of the corresponding forms in Modern English will reveal that, from the Anglo-Saxon originals, a large number of unaccented terminal syllables have been dropped.

We need now to account for the change from "trochaic" metrical tendency to "iambic." Today English poetry is all but wholly "iambic" in metrical spirit. This, again we believe, is due largely to organic mutations in our mother tongue. When the Anglo-Saxon infinitive form *bidan* changed to the Middle English weaker form "bidden" and then



finally dropped the *on* and simply became "bid," the sign "to" more definitely was added to the beginning to indicate the sign of the infinitive: "to bid." *Gifan* became "to give"; *cwellan*, "to quell"; *springan*, "to spring"; *drifan*, "to drive"; etc. Need we observe that such later forms are "iambic" where the older forms were "trochaic"? Again, in Anglo-Saxon, the cases of nouns were usually indicated by final endings. When these were dropped, the use of prepositions was introduced in large degree. Thus we now have "in town," "on deck," "in bed," "at school," "for home," "of course," etc. All this is "iambic" in form. Again, with the disappearance of the adjectival endings and of case endings in nouns we got such grammatical arrangements, by position, as "the boy," "blue sky," "sound health," "three weeks," "loud noise," etc. This placing of the weaker adjective before the stronger noun also is "iambic." And in the instance of our verbs and their auxiliaries, when the endings were dropped from both, we got "shall go," "was told," "may run," "has been set," "shall have been," etc. This placing of the weaker auxiliary before the stronger verb, again, submits itself to the "iambic" plan of accent pattern. Moreover, in making our word forms by adding prefixes from foreign and native sources we have got many "iambic" forms; thus: "bedim," "forbid," "defame," "include," "repress," "connote," "dislike," etc. Accordingly, in this organic change in pronunciation, in word forms, and in means of indicating by position the grammatical relations—as thus, *monnes hond* became "the hand of man"—organically pretty much the whole weave and woof of the texture of our mother tongue shifted accentually from the "trochaic" movement or motion to the "iambic" movement. It is not too much to say that the reason why modern English poetry is

essentially "iambic" is because that is the organic nature of the vocabulary and grammatical forms of the language in which it is written. Our prevailing "iambic" meter is not mechanical: it is organic. Any other language whose organic genius and forms are not like those of English could not easily have an identical metrical scheme in its verse. This conclusion argues somewhat against our attempting to scan our native English verse by the Latin grammarians' rules of classical quantitative verse.

Then, too, the English vocabulary used in our poetry—in scientific prose the case is not quite so strong—is highly monosyllabic. A painstaking study made by the late Adelaide Crapsey<sup>21</sup> of a large amount (more than 125,000 words) of the poetry of Milton, Pope, Tennyson, Swinburne, Francis Thompson, and Maurice Hewlett reveals the rather astounding fact that approximately 80 per cent of the vocabulary used by these poets is monosyllabic. Her report shows further that some 17 per cent of the words are dissyllabic and only 4.7 per cent are polysyllabic. Furthermore, her data show that of the 17 per cent of dissyllables 23 per cent are regularly "iambic." In a word, nearly 85 per cent of the vocabulary of these authors has in it the regular possibility of "iambic" metrical movement. Usually our monosyllables such as nouns and verbs are the important words in the sentence, and, according to organic Anglo-Saxon emphasis, normally receive accent because of their importance. Since, however, there is no regularly fixed accent on English monosyllables, such monosyllabic nouns and verbs may easily lend themselves, in a metrical scheme, to being less strongly accented or not accented at all, as the metrical plan may re-

<sup>21</sup> *A Study in English Metrics*, 1918.

quire. In our scheme of things, our monosyllabic articles (*the, a, an*) and our monosyllabic prepositions (*at, in, to, for, of, on, by*), all of which are employed very frequently, are unemphatic and are placed before the more emphatic nouns. Our monosyllabic auxiliaries (*may, can, must, might, could, would, should, shall, will, do, and did*) are also unemphatic before the more emphatic basic verbs. And our many monosyllabic adjectives (*good, high, red, flat, bad, hot, dry, cool, long, etc.*) are likewise unemphatic before the more important nouns. All this suggests that the normal sequence of words in English is organically "iambic." Indeed, despite our supposed poetic license in wrenching accents, there is really a rather small amount of marked inversion of word order in English verse.<sup>22</sup>

And now what about the caesura pause and balanced two half-lines in English verse? We will recall that this was a very definite characteristic of Anglo-Saxon. We will recall, too, that it was strictly medial and not sectional. We will

<sup>22</sup> Note that, except in the case of "homeward," the word order in the opening stanza of Gray's *Elegy* is quite normal.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,  
The plowman homeward plods his weary way  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Note, excepting in the case of "sweet," placed out of order here for emphasis, the somewhat natural sequence of the words and phrases of Shakespeare's,

Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;  
And this our life exempt from public haunt  
Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones and good in everything.

Consider how natural, except for the inversion that is scarcely noticeable

recall that Latin<sup>1</sup> quantitative verse, also, had a caesura but that it was more fluctuating and variable in its position in the foot. If we return to the Latin and French carol-hymn material, we see that either the lines there are rather short with slight pauses at the close, or, if the lines are longer, there is a tendency to pause at the ends of "speech groups" within the lines. Surely our Elizabethan critics, soon after our English meter had passed from under the supposed French influence, considered our lines of poetry to be somewhat balanced. Gascoigne wrote, "certain pauses or rests in a verse, which may be called caesuras, whereof I would be loth to stand long, since it is at the discretion of the writers, . . . but yet thus much I will adventure to write, that in a

in the first and the tenth lines, is the order of phrasing in Tennyson's,

As thro' the land at eve we went,  
And pluck'd the ripen'd ears,  
We fell out, my wife and I,  
O, we fell out, I know not why,  
And kiss'd again with tears.  
And blessings on the falling out  
That all the more endears,  
When we fall out with those we love  
And kiss again with tears!  
For when we came where lies the child  
We lost in other years,  
There above the little grave,  
O, there above the little grave,  
We kiss'd again with tears.

And note how regular in order is the phrasing of

Tybalt is dead, and Romeo banished!  
That "banished," that one word "banished"  
Hath slain ten thousand Tybalts.

We need scarcely add that much of our ordinary prose is also semi-metrical, simply because of the organic nature of our normal vocabulary and word order.

verse of eight syllables the pause will stand in the midst, . . .” Sir Philip Sidney represents English verse, unlike the Italian or Spanish, as “never almost” failing of the “caesura of breathing space.” King James, patron of metrics, said, “Remember also to make a section in the middes of everie lyne, quhethir the line be long or short.”<sup>28</sup> And whatever be our theories of French influence somewhat destroying the balanced two half-lines in English, and especially in Chaucer, the fact is that MS Harleian 1758 and MS Harleian 7333 show that his lines were looked upon as being definitely of balanced two parts—as in Anglo-Saxon. The lines are there set down with the very well-known mark (the period) that indicated the balanced half-lines. Thus:

When that April . wit his shoures swote  
The drought of March . hath perced to the rote.

Our early poets and critics, following close upon the supposed French influence, did not consider that English verse had lost its organic bipartite nature.

Just as the organic changes in our mother tongue, before and after the Norman Conquest, resulted in eliminating many “loose and unattached unaccented syllables” and thus made more regular the recurrence of our accents in verse, and just as that organic change also tended to shift our accent of words and grammatical forms from “trochaic” to “iambic,” so that organic change tended to make more uniform in length our “speech groups.” Since the element of pause in a line is more a matter of natural pause at the end of “speech groups,” and is not essentially a matter of mechanical met-

<sup>28</sup> See Guest's *History of English Rhythm*, Volume I, Book II, chapter iii, for the instances quoted and for additional comment.

rics, we should expect that, while still retaining the pause of Anglo-Saxon, the pause in our modern verses would be more variable as to location. Investigators<sup>24</sup> who have made a special study of the pause show that while the pause varies somewhat in modern verse it still tends to occur toward the middle of the line. Even a casual observer detects the marked balanced two half-lines in Thomson's "Gifts":

Give a man a horse || he can ride,  
Give a man a boat || he can sail;  
And his rank and wealth, || his strength and health,  
On sea nor shore || shall fail.

Or in Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's "*Dominus Illuminatio Mea*":

In the hour of death, || after this life's whim,  
When the heart beats low, || and the eyes grow dim,  
And pain has exhausted || every limb—  
The lover of the Lord || shall trust in Him.

But the sensitive recording instruments in our psychological laboratories show that even in poems where we might least suspect it there is a somewhat definite tendency to pause near the middle of the line—at the end of the speech group—and thus to balance two half-lines. Thus, from the experiments of Dr. Warren Brown, we get (figures indicating time relationships):

<sup>24</sup> See Snell's *Pause: A Study of Its Nature and Its Rhythmical Function in Verse*, etc. (Monograph, University of Michigan); Wallin's researches in the "Rhythm of Speech," *Studies from the Yale Psychological Laboratory*, IX (1901); Stetson's "Rhythm and Rhyme" in *Harvard Psychological Studies*, I, 449; Jacob's *The Foundations and Nature of Verse*, chapter xii, "The Phrase: Its Nature and Its Length."

Sunset (94) and evening star (174)  
 And one clear call (157) for me (115)  
 And may there be no moaning (170) of the bar (101)  
 When I (56) put out to sea. (247)<sup>25</sup>

And likewise,

Know ye the land (118) where the cypress and the myrtle (214)  
 Are emblems of deeds (143) that are done in their clime? (317)

We Anglo-Saxons express ourselves primarily in terms of "speech groups"<sup>26</sup> that are organic in their nature, in terms of the rhythmical action of the voice, rhythmically controlled by the air from the lungs, rhythmically operated in terms of the law of supply and exhaustion.

Of course, if we read any English poem in the light of some preconceived, more or less insistently regular metrical plan, whether accentual or quantitative, we shall experience little sense of balanced lines in terms of speech groups. But if we read our poems emotionally, let ourselves go in terms of genuine emotional rhythmical functioning, as we should do, then we experience a rather definite balancing of the parts of a verse, for the very reason that we shall have expressed our emotions and ideas in terms of the rhythmic "speech groups" which are organic in their make-up.<sup>27</sup> Let

<sup>25</sup> See Jacob's *The Foundations and Nature of Verse*, chapter xii, where the excellent work in this field by Brown, Stetson, Wallin, Scripture, and others is well summarized.

<sup>26</sup> See Rickert's *New Methods for the Study of Literature*, chapter v, "Rhythms," for a scholarly investigation of the length of "speech groups."

<sup>27</sup> For poems having marked balance in the lines see the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 16, 19, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 38, 39, 43, 74, 83, 567, 722, 743, 798, 848, 882, and 883. See also the many

us read really emotionally Witter Bynner's exaltingly beautiful "A Grace before Poems" (*Grenstone Poems*) and detect how we naturally tend to pause toward the middle of most of the lines; that is, at the ends of "speech groups":

## A GRACE BEFORE POEMS

Is there such a place as Grenstone?  
Celia, hear them ask!  
Tell me, shall we share it with them?—  
Shall we let them breathe and bask

On the windy, sunny pasture,  
Where the hill-top turns its face  
Toward the valley of the mountain,  
Our beloved place?

Shall we show them through our churchyard,  
With its crumbling wall  
Set between the dead and living?  
Shall our willowed waterfall,

Huckleberries, pines, and bluebirds,  
Be a secret we shall share?—  
If they make but little of it,  
Celia, shall we care?

And, finally, let us give a moment of consideration to the subject whether English verse is accentual or quantitative. The pros and cons have waxed warm and sometimes hot.<sup>20</sup> In the light of the discussion in this chapter, we may

Middle English alliterative poems and the poems in Carleton Brown's *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*.

<sup>20</sup> For the relation between accent and quantity, see Omond's *English Metrics*, which is an excellent survey of the subject from Puttenham to Robert Bridges; Alden's *English Verse*, Part III; Snell's "Objective Study



be permitted to suggest that English meter is a phenomenon that receives its existence distinctly and directly from the organic nature of the make-up of our mother tongue. Indeed, if we will study the organic and inherent phonetic system of any language, above all its dynamic forces, we shall be able to tell what kind of metrical verse it will develop. And usually the leopard does not change its spots. The Latin classical prosodists may have formulated, with their admirable genius for schematic system, rules for quantitative verse which they foisted upon the older Greek poetry and also upon their own; but their imposing this plan upon "literary" Latin did not change the accentual Latin of the folk. In English there has never been a period when the great productive verse of that time has been successfully put into a strait-jacket of quantitative meter, its native fiber being accentual, as was the case of the Latin poets from Virgil to Claudian. That there have been really conscious efforts to write quantitative English verse<sup>29</sup> goes without

of Syllabic Quantity in English Verse" (two articles), *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXIII, XXXIV, Scripture's *Elements of Experimental Phonetics* and his recent (1929) *Grundzüge der Englischen Verswissenschaft*, Jacob's *The Foundation and Nature of Verse*, where footnote bibliographies cite many additional references; Goodell's "Quantity in English Verse," *Transactions American Philological Association*, XVI, 78-103. The various volumes by Kaluza, Schipper, Mayor, Saintsbury, Courthope, Verrier, and so forth, contain interesting discussions.

<sup>29</sup> Omond's *English Metrists* is a scholarly presentation of the entire field. Every student of English poetry should digest this volume. If the student would like to see how really artificial the rules for quantitative meter in English have been conceived, he need but to turn to Thomas Champion's *Observations in the Art of English Poesie*, "The Tenth Chapter, Of the Quantity of English Syllables." This is now accessible in Ernest Rhys's *The Prelude to Poetry*, pages 81-85, in the Everyman's Library series.

further saying. We need but to read these attempts to see at once that they are not in the mood, form, and metrical plan native to our mother tongue which characterize the great preponderance of our English poetic utterance. The very fact that we have had these very earnest endeavors to write quantitative verse in English—always with rather unsatisfactory results even to those who firmly believe in that as the metrical scheme for English poetry—is rather conclusive evidence that fundamentally our verse must be accentual, Saintsbury to the contrary notwithstanding.

That there are long syllables and short syllables in English verse needs no argument. But that they are long or short in the Latin prosodists' sense of quantity—that is, that a somewhat regularly definite ratio of 1 to 2 obtains between short and long vowels—is scarcely tenable. Saintsbury holds that to accent a syllable prolongs its duration of sound and that not to accent it shortens its duration of sound: that accent and quantity are identical phenomena. Ada F. Snell, after careful analyses, in the laboratory, of "iambic," "anapaestic," "trochaic," and "dactylic" material from such poets as Tennyson, Swinburne, Shelley, Coleridge, and Browning, shows that in some 93 per cent (it averages that) of the cases the long syllable occurs in the accented position in the foot. Out of a total of some 378 feet analyzed, in only 23 did the long syllable and the regular metrical accent not coincide. She concluded by supporting Professor Saintsbury's theory that quantity and accent are, in effect, identical phenomena. In measuring the lengths of syllables, the duration of time required to pronounce them in the verse where they occurred, she found that the "average length for all short syllables [taken as a group] is .2 [of a second] and of all long syllables [taken as a group] is .42 [of a second]."

She asserts, "The ratio of short to long syllables is therefore 1:2."<sup>80</sup> However, her further measurements showed that "syllables vary in length from .05 [of a second] to .92 [of a second]." This tends to show rather conclusively that, in English verse, there is no such regular fixed ratio of 1:2 between individual long and short vowels or syllables as there was in literary quantitative Latin. Her evidence argues that, today, there continues to be in modern English verse something of the irregularity of degree of accent which was so characteristic of Anglo-Saxon verse. Wallin, conducting experiments of somewhat similar intent, concluded: "The absolute duration of any syllable is variable." He continued, "The ratio sustained between the average unemphatic and emphatic syllables varies with different subjects"—for English all the emphatic syllables are at least half as long again as the average unemphatic—and "The ratios existing between individual emphatic or unemphatic syllables of the same or of different records, are neither invariable, nor are they the rates of simple proportion. . . . Not infrequently the rate is reversed, so that the sporadic unemphatic syllables may be longer than the average of the emphatic syllables. . . . These facts incontestably refute the theory of simple proportion." He adds: "All speech is quantitative; and the distinction, popularly and confidently posited, between quantitative and non-quantitative verse is grounded on fallacious assumptions. The question of the quantitative character of poetry or prose, is closed."<sup>81</sup> If Wallin's conclusions are correct, they show that there is quantity in English oral utter-

<sup>80</sup> "Objective Study of Syllabic Quantity in English Verse," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXIV, 433.

<sup>81</sup> "Researches on the Rhythm of Speech," *Studies from Yale Psychological Laboratory*, IX, 23 (1901).

ance; but they also indicate that perhaps we are not quite justified in advocating that quantity in a ratio of approximately 1 to 2 is responsible for our metrical rhythm. Perhaps we should join forces with Schipper, Guest, Skeat, and these modern scientific investigators and say that the essentially accentual character of the verse of our mother tongue, Anglo-Saxon, continues, in more regular recurring degrees of intensity of accent, in present-day English poetical utterance. English continues still to be somewhat English!

In concluding this part of the chapter may we volunteer the thought that perhaps we have been for centuries enthusiastic and innocent victims of the Latin prosodists. Perhaps even they were innocent victims of their own enthusiasm. They emphasized scansion, which, from its very artificial character, imposes conformity to rigid pattern. So long as language phenomena fitted into the fixed scheme, all was well; but the moment they did not fit, rules had to be made for the exceptions; then there were rules for the normal and rules for the abnormal. As victims of the prosodists we forgot that poetic utterance is emotionally fluid and that rules were made for poetry and not poetry for rules. Under the spell of the rules of Latin quantitative prosody we have done our best to fit its tenets to accentual English verse, an enterprise in which the organic natures of the two languages forbade success.

Our difficulty has been not that we have not studied our poetry but that we have studied it with meticulous eyes from the point of view of the individual detail of the foot and not from the point of view of the larger organic unity and rhythm of poems as wholes. Our studies in prosody have been, all too frequently, studies in the bone-yard of abnormal exceptions rather than in the arena of fine, healthy,

normal actuality of the poet's mind. Most of us have, at times, succumbed to the tyranny of mechanical scansion. Some English poems scan easily; others scarcely scan at all. To scan some of the beautifully exalting English poems which do not readily submit to a preconceived metrical plan is almost a high crime and misdemeanor. This is not to urge careless irregularity, for normally we desire approximate regularity. The point is that we are not content to recognize the spirit of romance and that of classical poetry as leavening influences in the metrical movement of our poetry. Let us again remind ourselves that organic emotional rhythm is the essential characteristic of English poetry, and that meter based upon the irregular recurrent accents of Anglo-Saxon, not upon the rigidly regular quantity of the Latin, is its accepted organic metrical convention. Time as in music and duration of sound as in classical poetry are not highly pertinent factors in English verse. The primary thing is merely that accents shall come with a fair degree of regularity; this is all that is necessary for the Anglo-Saxon ear. Whether or not in the metrical sequence the accented syllables are preceded or followed by one, two, or three unaccented syllables is of slight consequence, as a reading of Coleridge's "Christabel," one of the most beautifully rhythmic and most beautifully metrical poems in the English language, will show. The *letter* of the classical metrical scheme in English poetry killeth, but the *spirit* thereof giveth life.

#### THE ENGLISH METRICAL MOVEMENTS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

From the Latin prosodists we have borrowed the conventional nomenclature that we employ when we discuss details

of the technique of English verse. Their terminology was derived from their conception of the nature of quantitative poetry; we apply it to our poetry which is essentially accentual. Since our native genius has never developed a theory of prosody of our own, in the sense that the Latin did, we have, accordingly, no native poetic nomenclature of our own. In the absence of such technical terms, we have been glad to make use of the borrowed terms. If we may keep in mind that the classical "long" and "short" syllables, or vowels, are to correspond to the English "accented" and "unaccented" syllables, an explanation of the simpler forms of our English feet can be made clear in terms of the borrowed terminology. Thus:

When, in classical poetry, a poetic foot consisted of a long syllable preceded by a short one (— —) (— '), it was called *iambic*. In English, of course, such a metrical movement is seen in Sir Thomas Wyatt's

Forget not yet the tried intent  
Of such a truth as I have meant;  
My great travail so gladly spent,  
Forget not yet.

When, in classical poetry, a poetic foot consisted of a long syllable preceded by two short ones (— — —) (— — '), it was termed *anapaestic*. In our English poetry, this is exemplified by Dr. A. M. Beede's excellent translation of a beautiful Sioux Indian song, "The Land of the Evening Mirage," the first stanza of which is:

There 's a beautiful island away in the West,  
It's the land of the evening mirage;  
And the stars and the spirits of dead men have rest  
In the land of the evening mirage,  
In the land of the evening mirage,

Where the stars and the spirits of dead men have rest  
In the land of the evening mirage.

When, in classical poetry, a poetic foot was composed of a long syllable followed by a short syllable (—) (´), it was called *trochaic*. In English, this metrical movement is illustrated by the bacchanalian spirit in Frank Dempster Sherman's "Bacchus." In reading it, be careful not to shift to the iambic: sustain the movement. The first stanza:

Listen to the tawny thief,       •  
Hid beneath the waxen leaf,  
Growling at his fairy host,  
Bidding her with angry boast  
Fill his cap with wine distilled  
From the dew the dawn has spilled;  
Stored away in golden casks  
Is the precious draught he asks.

And when, again, a poetic foot was composed of a long syllable followed by two short ones (—) (´), it was termed *dactylic*. This metrical movement is exemplified in the very well-known imitation of the classical dactylic hexameter, Longfellow's *Evangeline*. Try to read it quantitatively—if you can—and then read it accentually as, of course, you naturally will be inclined to do. Be careful to sustain the metrical pattern throughout: do not shift to the anapaestic. It begins:

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,  
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,  
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic;  
Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms.  
Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean  
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.

In classical poetry<sup>9</sup> there were many other poetic feet, largely used as substitutional equivalents of one or another of the foregoing, which, technically, need not concern us much here. If the foot was made up of two long syllables (— —) (‘ ’), it was called *spondaic*, a full sequence of which we practically never have in English except sometimes in an individual line. If the foot consisted of two short syllables (—) (—) it was *pyrrhic*. In accentual English verse, this would scarcely appear except perhaps as a substitute for another foot. And if there were a sort of “trochaic-iambic” combination, a reversal of the norm, so that there was a long syllable then two shorts and then another long (— — —) (‘ — —), it was called a *choriambus*. But we must have an end. Any of the treatises, listed in the earlier part of this chapter, on classical metrics will provide material more than enough to satisfy the general student of English verse. Our main concern shall be the four main feet—*iambic*, *anapaestic*, *trochaic*, *dactylic*—presented above. These seem to occur in English poetry—the iambic, naturally—in perhaps more than 90 per cent of our poetry.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For discussion of the nature of English poetic feet see: Guest's *History of English Rhythms*, Volume I, Book II, lines 167-174; Schipper's *History of English Versification*, chapters xiii, xiv; Routh's "English Iambic Meter," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XL, 921-933; Whitmore's "A Proposed Compromise in Metrics," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XLI, 1024 ff.; Creeks's "Rising and Falling Rhythm in English Verse," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXV, 76-90; Stewart's *Modern Metrical Technique*, and his "A Method toward the Study of Dipodic Verse," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXIX, 979 ff.; Bolton's "Rhythm," *American Journal of Psychology*, VI, 145-238. Jacob's *The Foundations and Nature of Verse* provides an excellent presentation of recent laboratory investigations of the several scholars, such as Woodrow, Wallin, Stet-



The prevailing mood of the English mind is that of seriousness and sobriety. The native English stock is somewhat insistent and firm. It is scarcely impetuous and impulsive. Accordingly, this rather vigorous thoroughgoingness finds a ready and apt metrical movement to express its poetic ideas and emotions in the rather insistent and firm movement supplied by our iambic sequence of unaccented and accented syllables. Conventionally, iambic metrical movement is called "ascending" or "rising"; that is, there is a gradual increase of vigor of preparatory movement leading up to the final accent on the syllable; thus:



Such a movement is not inherently rapid, but rather definitely forward and upward moving. It is an apt medium for the flowing emotions of a vigorous but rather regulated spirit and mind. The accented syllables, as in old Anglo-Saxon, are the significant aspect of such a movement. It aptly expresses the subdued and quiet, while behind and underneath there is a latent power of deep yearning, as in Tennyson's

Forgive my grief for one removed,  
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.  
I trust he lives in thee, and there  
I find him worthier to be loved.

son, Hurst and McKay, Bolton, etc. No student of metrics can afford not to be acquainted with the researches of these men.

For English meter in the light of musical notation and equivalence, the standard work is, of course, Sidney Lanier's *The Science of English Verse*. See also Dabney's *The Musical Basis of Verse*; Andrews' *The Writing and Reading of Verse*, Jacob's *The Foundations and Nature of Verse*, where footnote citations of references may be found; and Poe's *Poetic Principle and Rationale of Verse*.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,  
Confusions of a wasted youth;  
Forgive them where they fail in truth,  
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

Or it may be used to express the vigor of the keen and calculating man who puts the spirit of his own all but impetuous individuality into it, as in Shakespeare's

I cannot tell what you and other  
Men think of this life; but, for my single self,  
I had as lief not be as live to be  
In awe of such a thing as I myself.

Or, with short lines aiding the movement, it may be employed to express the vigorously firm and insistent, as in Macaulay's

Lars Porsena of Clusium  
By the Nine Gods he swore  
That the great house of Tarquin  
Should suffer wrong no more.  
By the Nine Gods he swore it,  
And named a trysting day,  
And bade his messengers ride forth,  
East and west and south and north,  
To summon his array.

Or, even the still more vigorous Anglo-Saxon independence that welcomes the struggle of life, as in Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra." Note here the irregular recurrence of accented syllables in the last three lines; but emotionally they are rhythmical. And that is what counts.

Then welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,

Each sting that bids nor sit, nor stand, but go!  
Be our joys three-fourths pain!  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;  
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never  
grudge the throe!

Or again, it may aptly be the medium to express that sublime and exalting spirit of the Anglo-Saxon who on the field of honor—the poem was found, during the World War, in the pocket of an unknown Australian soldier dead on the soil of France!—caught the vision of the eternal verities:

## VICTORY

Ye that have faith to look with fearless eyes  
Beyond the tragedy of a world at strife,  
And know that out of death and night shall rise  
The dawn of ampler life:  
Rejoice, whatever anguish rend the heart,  
That God has given you the priceless dower  
To live in these great times and have your part  
In Freedom's crowning hour,  
That ye may tell your sons who see the light  
High in the heavens—their heritage to take—  
"I saw the powers of darkness take their flight,  
I saw the morning break."

There is here no absolutely regular pattern of recurrence of accents, nor are they equal in degree of intensity—indeed, there is wide variety of degree of intensity—but the poem, approximating the iambic metrical movement, is poetry of a very high order. It sounds mightily like Shakespeare's *Henry V* to his troops before the Battle of Agincourt. Both that and this are in the natural and organic iambic meter.

Just as the prevalence of accented syllables in sequence gives us the effect of firmness, insistency, and vigor, so the presence of unaccented syllables will tend to make more even the recurrent stronger accents. In pronouncing, some of the energy given to the strongly accented syllable will have to be diverted to the two unaccented syllables. Indeed the presence of such unaccented syllables adds a note of the musical to the metrical movement. Thus an accented syllable preceded by only one unaccented syllable, as in iambic, sometimes "pounds" just a bit; but if there be two unaccented syllables before the accented one, then there is a more musical, wave-like, upward surging. It produces the effect of *two* lighter preparatory movements before the final accent is given and indeed *seems* to make the metrical movement a bit slower. Thus:



It, like the iambic, is also an "ascending" or "rising" metrical movement. It is iambic "toned" to more musical and wave-like movement by the presence of two, rather than one, unstressed syllable. Something of the iambic firmness still remains, but it is musically toned down. Such a metrical movement is an excellent medium for the expression of our musical and dreamy moods of melancholy, as in Poe's

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.

Or, it may express a delicate and musical fancy behind which really there is anguish of heart, as in Dorothy Martin's "A Lament":

## A LAMENT

The tree by the lake is not happy today.  
She droops her proud head, and she sighs.  
Her soft little laugh has turned to a moan.  
Her song is a dirge, and she cries.

She weeps in her mirror and wrings her long hands.  
She tosses her hair, and she quakes.  
Her branches all quiver. She writhes in the wind.  
Her heart can see mine, and it breaks.

And while the anapaestic metrical movement is somewhat more musical and upward-surfing, it, too, can still express the native vigor of the more simplified iambic, as in Byron's

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
Where the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

The anapaest can also be used to express very vigorous and upward-surfing emotion, as in Browning's vigorous "Boot and Saddle":

## BOOT AND SADDLE

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!  
Rescue my Castle, before the hot day  
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey;  
(*Chor.*) Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you 'd say;  
Many 's the friend there will listen and pray  
"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—  
(*Chor.*) Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

Forty smiles off, like a roebuck at bay,  
Flouts Castel Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:  
Who laughs, "Good fellows, ere this, by my fay,  
(*Chor.*) Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

It has been objected that the anapaest may lend itself too readily to mere imitation of physical movement, such as the galloping of a horse in these selections from Byron and Browning. Surely, however, "Boot and Saddle" expresses its underlying emotion of vigorous cavalier spirit most effectively via the iambic-anapaestic metrical movement. And Shelley's "The Cloud" is a gem of poetic mood and music. You will not fail to note the organic balanced lines—intensified, of course, by the internal rime. The anapaest movement is highly apt.

## THE CLOUD

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden  
Whom mortals call the moon,  
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor  
By the midnight breezes strewn;  
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,  
Which only the angels hear,  
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof  
The stars peep behind her and peer;  
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,  
Like a swarm of golden bees,  
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,  
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,  
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,  
Are each paved with the moon and these.

That iambs and anapaests rather naturally fit into each other, by way of substitutions, is readily seen. Their metrical movements are after the same pattern. Nevertheless, the

two, in their unadulterated forms free from substitutions, are best fitted to express slightly different types of emotions. Either one carried too long in absolute regularity becomes monotonous. Too much regularity of recurrence of the accent in either is not quite in harmony with the spirit of our native English emotional functioning. We are, frequently, too vigorous to be put into so constant and so formal a restriction. Insistent and firm and, on occasion, fond of tuneful music, the native Anglo-Saxon mind likes to express itself—and likes to hear others so express themselves—in terms of angularities in the midst of regularities. When it gets tense, it gives values to its words as did the old Anglo-Saxon. Hence it may express itself naturally in a sequence of iambs, anapaests, and spondees, one sometimes substituted for the other. John Masefield's "Sea Fever" is not regularly recurrent in its accents, but what recurrence of accents there is coincides most fittingly with the rhetorically important words. And that is about all the native Anglo-Saxon ear asks. Pattern and balanced lines are here in evidence, as you will easily detect. The last stanza reads:

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,  
To the gull's way and the whale's way, where the wind's like a  
whetted knife;  
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow rover,  
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

In discussing the reason why iambic metrical movement overwhelmingly prevails in English poetry, we may have given the impression that our vocabulary is so preponderantly iambic that we have scarcely any words that are trochaic in metrical form. Quite the contrary. Examination of our English vocabulary shows that there is really a goodly percent-

age of trochaic words. From the original Anglo-Saxon stock there are many trochaic words that did not change. Thus: "o'ver," "wheth'er," "eve'ning," "mead'ow," "an'ger," "lin'ger," "reck'on," "al'tar," "car'ry," "bu'ry," "ei'ther," "laugh'ter," "hun'dred," "thun'der," "an'swer," "fin'ger," "dev'il," "doz'en," "ste'ward," "bos'om." And the many comparatives accentually remain the same. Thus: "el'der," "bet'ter," "high'er." And the many words in the present participial *-ing*; thus: "will'ing," "do'ing," "run'ning," "bless'ing," "bend'ing." And the many, many words with monosyllabic suffixes: "wor'thy," "drea'ry," "hap'py," "rock'y," "sun'ny"; also "bold'ly," "knight'ly," "clear'ly," "ful'ly"; and, likewise, "gra'cious," "won'drous," "griev'ous"; likewise, "wit'ness," "blue'ness," "red'ness"; and also "work'er," "sing'er," "read'er," "talk'er"; and "win'some," "whole'some," "blithe'some"; and "home'less," "view'less," "wit'less," and "home'ward," "back'ward," and "tear'ful," "fear'ful," "hope'ful." In Adelaide Crapsey's report of her study of the vocabulary of Milton, Pope, Tennyson, and others, cited in the earlier part of this chapter, she pointed out that some 17 per cent of their total vocabulary was dissyllabic and that 23 per cent of this 17 per cent was iambic. That means that 76 per cent of the dissyllabic words employed by these poets in the poems she examined were trochaic! If course, we shall remember that 80 per cent of their total vocabulary in those poems was monosyllabic. Notwithstanding, Miss Crapsey's study reveals the fact that there are numerous trochaic dissyllables in our vocabulary. When we recall that the old Anglo-Saxon was trochaic in metrical pattern; and when we consider that our present-day vocabulary has numerous trochees; and when we remember that our many monosyllables do not have any regularly



fixed degrees of accent, we may conclude that perhaps there may be such a thing as trochaic and dactylic metrical movement in our English verse. Assuming that there is trochaic metrical movement in English, what type of emotion would most readily and most aptly be expressed by it?

If the iambic movement has a sort of short running start before the actual stroke of the accent—thus:



—then trochaic, just the opposite of iambic, would have the intensive accent first followed by a somewhat sudden falling or slipping down. Thus:



That is, we get the effect of suddenly having risen, then suddenly having fallen down. There is the sudden firm stroke and the relaxation. This is conventionally termed "falling" rhythm. It does not easily or for long support itself; it is difficult to sustain. Obviously moods and emotions of action and rapid movement like that of dancing would be best expressed in such a metrical movement. And this is actually the case. William Allingham's "The Fairies":

Up the airy mountain,  
Down the rushy glen  
We daren't go a-hunting  
For fear of little men:  
Wee folk, good folk,  
Trooping all together;  
Green jacket, red cap,  
And white owl's feather!

This, for the most part, expresses physical movement—light and tripping dancing. But the trochaic *can* express subtle emotion. Note the sheer abandon of joy in Blake's "Songs of Innocence: Introduction":

## SONGS OF INNOCENCE: INTRODUCTION

Piping down the valleys wild,  
Piping songs of pleasant glee,  
On a cloud I saw a child,  
And he, laughing, said to me:

"Pipe a song about a Lamb!"  
So I piped with merry cheer.  
"Piper, pipe that song again";  
So I piped: he wept to hear.

"Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;  
Sing thy songs of happy cheer!"  
So I sung the same again,  
While he wept with joy to hear.

"Piper, sit thee down and write  
In a book, that all may read."  
So he vanished from my sight;  
And I plucked a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,  
And I stained the water clear,  
And I wrote my happy songs  
Every child may joy to hear.

We are prompted to say that this emotion of gleeful joy could not have been expressed, at least not so effectively, in the more insistent, firm, and grave iambic. Emotions that

are light and tripping are best expressed in a movement that starts suddenly and then quickly relaxes. The light and tripping parts of Milton's "L'Allegro" are expressed in trochees. Longfellow's "Hiawatha," Hogg's "A Boy's Song," Tennyson's two "Locksley Halls," Beaumont's "On the Tombs in Westminster Abbey," and many others are evidence that our poets have found expression through the trochee despite the fact that some critics insist that there is no such thing as trochaic in English verse.

The interesting thing is that even the supposed light and tripping trochee can be utilized to express really vigorous emotion. Henley did it to advantage in "Romance":

#### ROMANCE

"Talk of pluck!" pursued the Sailor,  
Set at euchre on his elbow,  
"I was on the wharf at Charleston,  
Just ashore from off the runner.

"It was gray and dirty weather,  
And I heard a drum go rolling,  
Rub-a-dubbing in the distance,  
Awful dour-like and defiant.

"In and out among the cotton,  
Mud, and chains, and stores, and anchors,  
Tramped a squad of battered scarecrows—  
Poor old Dixie's bottom dollar!

"Some had shoes, but all had rifles,  
Them that wasn't bald was beardless,  
And the drum was rolling 'Dixie,'  
And they stepped to it like men, sir!

"Rags and tatters, belts and bayonets,  
On they swung, the drum a-rolling,  
Mum and sour. It looked like fighting,  
And they meant it too, by thunder!"

The initial accented syllable at the beginning of each line combined with the many hard consonants in the words happily express the vigor and determination that are the theme of the poem.

If, however, instead of only one unstressed syllable following the stressed one we have two such syllables following, then again, because of the presence of more unaccented syllables, we get a more moody and musical effect. This metrical movement—this dactylic foot—was the one employed by the classical poets to express the Greek lilting music of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and the Latin delicate sonorousness of the *Aeneid*. With the sudden strongly accented syllable quickly followed by two unaccented syllables, the falling down, the sudden slump, is retarded and rendered in two smaller bumps rather than in one harder one. Thus:



A mellowing, moody, musical emotion and movement is best expressed via this metrical sequence. Now the fact is that this mood is not characteristic of the vigorous Anglo-Saxon mind. Perhaps, then, this dactylic metrical movement finds little use or place in English poetry. It is in this meter (dactylic hexameter) that most of the attempts to write accentual English verse in classical quantitative verse have been made. Few, if any, of these attempts have pleased the ear of the native stock. The standard example is, of course, *Evangelina*, quoted earlier in this part of the chapter. Ernest

Dowson's "*Libra Me*" is also a representative bit of dactylic movement:

Heart of my heart have I offered thee, pain of my pain,  
Yielding my life for the love of thee unto thy chain;  
Lady and Goddess be merciful, loose me again.

Here the moody, musical, semi-introspective emotion of yearning zeal is rather fittingly communicated to us via this dactylic metrical movement. And yet the essential difficulty lies in the fact that, racially speaking, this mood of introspection, of subdued, wistful yearning is not quite Anglo-Saxon. The Anglo-Saxon is masculine rather than—shall we say feminine? Witter Bynner has expressed it in his "*Ecce Homo*" ("Behold the Man") quoted once before.

BEHOLD THE MAN

Behold the man alive in me,  
Behold the man in you!  
If there is God—am I not he?  
Shall I myself undo?

I have been waiting long enough . . . .  
Impossible gods, good-bye;  
I wait no more . . . . The way is rough—  
But the god who climbs is I.

And this is in iambic! The difficulty seems not to be in the dactylic meter but in the fact that the mood best expressed by it is not wholly of Anglo-Saxon kind. And yet, strange as it may seem, the dactylic *has* been used to express some degree of vigor, as in Bryant's "Robert of Lincoln," Browning's "Holy-Cross Day," and "The Lost Leader," Scott's "Song of Clan Alpine," Masfield's "A Ballad of John Silver."

Ora H. Barlow's<sup>o</sup> "The Dream of Sierras" finds expression of its enthusiasm and vigor in dactylic metrical movement:

THE DREAM OF SIERRAS

Give me the whine of the Sierra's breezes,  
Swishing their way through the blue-blurred evening.  
Let me forget such a thing as a duty,  
Let me exult in the azure of pine trees,  
Breathing the essence of tingling sap-scent.

Let me dream on with the blue air before me,  
Blue as the heavens and blurred as a vision.  
Under a redwood of ages uncounted,  
Throwing my arms in a wild, rampant pleasure,  
Leave me, oh, leave me alone in Sierras!

In the light of our discussion thus far we may make at least two general statements. One is that the preponderant presence of accented syllables in a verse renders itself best fitted to express the more vigorous, firm, and insistent moods. The other is that the preponderant presence of unaccented syllables in a verse renders itself best fitted to express the more musical, moody, and semi-introspective musings. It is also clear that the iambic metrical movement is most naturally and organically suited to the expression of the Anglo-Saxon mind. And yet, we have seen that poems written in other metrical forms than iambic may also, in special cases at least, be employed to express, to a degree, the vigorous norm of the race. This gives rise to the crux: Is *all* English verse iambic, and is there, then, no difference between iambic and trochaic meters?<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Jacob's *The Foundations and Nature of Verse*, chapter xiv, "The Structure of the Foot," contains an excellent harmonizing of the results

The reports from our experimental psychologists pretty definitely support the idea that there is *not* a fundamental difference between our meters. Early in this chapter we quoted Professor Scripture: "A single line [of verse] is not made up of smaller units that can be marked off from each other. . . . No such divisions occur in the actually spoken sounds or no dividing points can be assigned in the tracing [i.e., in the laboratory tracing]. In fact there does not seem to be any system of feet that can be assigned to it or any form of such rhythm under which it can be classified." He continues: "The location of a point of emphasis is determined by the strength of the neighboring sounds. It is like the centroid [he calls the accented syllable, around which are grouped the unaccented syllables, a centroid] of a system of forces or the center of gravity of a body in being the point at which we can consider all the forces to be concentrated and yet have the same effect."<sup>84</sup> Another authority states: "There is no physical distinction between the several types of the different modes of distribution. There may be a mental or a felt difference between the iambus and the trochee, and the anapaest and the dactyl; but physical measurements of them always extend from centroid to centroid, independently of type differences. The modes of distribution are, on the whole, the same in prose and poetry."<sup>85</sup> And Jacob, after reviewing the work of the several experimental psycholo-

of laboratory investigation in determining the nature of the poetic foot and of the difference between the several feet.

<sup>84</sup> *Elements of Experimental Phonetics*, pages 553-554; also his *Grundzüge der Englischen Verswissenschaft* (1929), which presents his year's of laboratory experiment in support of this idea.

<sup>85</sup> Wallin's *Researches in the Rhythm of Speech*, page 113.

gists, concludes: "I cannot believe there is any essential difference between the various kinds of feet . . . these units are not like chips of mosaic that can be brought together to form a tone picture. Unless they were intimately and vitally related to each other upon some general principle of greater cohesiveness than mere chance juxtaposition, verse would fall asunder as speedily as a mosaic when the matrix is broken."<sup>88</sup>

Now it is the dominant underlying emotion, the theme, in a poem that gives mood, motion, and tone to a poem. The theme is the factor that determines the metrical movement. Emotion is the cement that holds the bits of mosaic together. If the more Anglo-Saxon sobriety, firmness, and vigorous insistency obtain, organically and naturally it should find expression in the normal iambic; and if the more light and tripping and the more musical and moody aspect obtain, naturally it should find an outlet in the trochaic. In a word, we should determine the metrical movement of a poem not from the individual line and foot—again we have been the innocent and enthusiastic victims of the Latin prosodists—but from the poem as a whole. The question, after all, is not whether there is any difference between the quantitative classical "iambic" and "trochaic" as accentually represented in our English prosody; the plain fact is that whenever the "trochaic" foot is employed, unless artificially sustained, it readily and easily breaks down and the metrical movement shifts to the organic and natural iambic. The dactyl is even harder to sustain. Thus the emotional tone of Browning's "Evelyn Hope" is normally sad. Now the emotion of sadness is not to be expressed in light and tripping meter. Browning, wishing to get a delicacy of touch to the poem,

<sup>88</sup> Jacob's *The Foundations and Nature of Verse*, page 178.



begins it in dactyls; but before the first stanza is concluded the metrical movement has shifted to iambic. Note:

## EVELYN HOPE

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!  
Sit and watch by her side an hour.  
That is her bookshelf, this her bed;  
She plucked that piece of geranium flower,  
Beginning to die, too, in the glass;  
Little has yet been changed, I think;  
The shutters are shut, no light may pass  
Save two long rays through the hinge's chink.

. . . . .  
I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!  
My heart seemed full as it could hold;  
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,  
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.  
So hush—I will give you this leaf to keep;  
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!  
There, that is our secret; go to sleep!  
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

By the time we have reached the last stanza, the metrical movement is markedly iambic-anapaestic. This iambic-anapaestic is the meter of the poem. Surely no one would arbitrarily hold that Tennyson's dirge in *The Princess*, when the Prince has fallen in the tournament and is brought before the Princess, is written in trochees, when the mood is so stately and so solemnly sad. Melancholy is a fundamental note in the Anglo-Saxon heart: he does not express his sadness via light and tripping dactyls:

Honte they brought the warrior dead;  
She nor swooned nor uttered cry,  
All her maidens watching said  
She must weep or she will die.

And surely no one will arbitrarily hold that Hood's "Bridge of Sighs" is dactylic when its mood and theme are compassionate sadness.

One more unfortunate  
Weary of breath,  
Rashly importunate  
Gone to her death.

The simple fact is that we do not read far in this poem before we unconsciously shift to the more organic and more natural anapaest. We are in urgent need of looking to the poem as a whole to determine its underlying emotion before, in reading it, we arbitrarily begin to put it into any kind of metrical pattern. When that mood and emotion have been determined, then the poem as a whole should be read in the metrical movement that is the most apt to express that particular emotion—always, however, keeping in mind that in individual places in the poem the poet may have desired to secure a variety of effect and may, perhaps, have for the moment employed a slightly different metrical movement.

Metrical movement is not so simplified a matter as merely a regular pattern of alternating accented and unaccented syllables. If we should write, in "trochaic" feet as we term it, the following:

Peggy is a young thing,  
Entered in her teens,  
Fair as day, sweet as May,

Fair as day, always gay;  
Peggy is a young thing,  
I 'm not very old;  
Well, I like to meet her at  
Waking of the fold.

Is it in the "trochaic" alone that the light and spirited tone of it is expressed? Here is actually what Allan Ramsey wrote in his "Peggy." The first stanza:

My Peggy is a young thing,  
Just enter'd in her teens,  
Fair as the day, and sweet as May,  
Fair as the day, and always gay;  
My Peggy is a young thing,  
And I 'm not very auld,  
Yet well I like to meet her at  
The wawking of the fauld.

This is "iambic"—according to prosodists. Obviously we are not yet ready to say the final word about English meters. Our experimental psychologists and our prosodists must give us more data before we can close the subject. It may be suggested that perhaps most of our difficulty to date has been due to the befogging effect of the colored goggles of classical meters and nomenclature that have not been conducive to seeing the matter of English metrical movement straight and clear. Perhaps once again we shall have to return to a study of the old Anglo-Saxon verse and once more trace metrical tendencies through to the present, not in terms of Latin-French influence but in terms of native fiber. This might result, too, in a native nomenclature. In any case, the mood

and tone of a poem must lie in its dominant emotion; and the metrical pattern in which that emotion is expressed must be organically inherent in the language used to express it. And accentual English is not quantitative classical Latin!

Finally let us recall that poetry is fundamentally the rhythmical (not metrical, necessarily) expression of sustained and deep emotion via language. In the poet's endeavor to express himself to the full, the very language he uses is something of a hindrance to full expression. Obviously, forceful and impassioned emotions poured forth into language, with that language not equal to the task of providing a full outlet, compel that language to become somewhat more regular and rigid. Just as sausage meat forced into the casing takes shape according to the elasticity or rigidity of the walls of the casing and the casing itself outwardly takes shape and form, so, likewise, when emotion is poured forth into English words the words also assume something of shape, order, and harmony characterizing the organic nature of the language. Since English is organically accentual, its accented syllables should have some organic effect on the rhythmic movements in which emotion is naturally expressed.

Since the natural metrical movement is "rising" or upward-lifting, in English, the recurrence of accents, in some degree of regularity, would tend to keep supported and bolstered up the language flow in which emotional rhythm is expressed. This is just what our meter seems to do. Note how, in Bliss Carman's "A Vagabond Song," the organic rhythms of groups of lines, of lines, and of parts of lines are enhanced and kept supported by the recurrence of the stressed syllables coming at just the opportune moments in the sequence.

## A VAGABOND SONG

There is something in the autumn that is native to my blood—  
 Touch of manner, hint of mood;  
 And my heart is like a rhyme,  
 With the yellow and the purple and the crimson keeping time.

The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry  
 Of bugles going by.  
 And my lonely spirit thrills  
 To see the frosty asters like a smoke upon the hills.

There is something in October sets the gypsy blood astir;  
 We must rise and follow her,  
 When from every hill of flame  
 She calls and calls each vagabond by name.

In Longfellow's "The Rainy Day"—plain iambic metrical movement—the lines and phrases rhythmically expressing the rhythmic emotion are supported by accents of varying degrees of intensity standing up at just the right points. This fact will appear all the more pronounced if we read the passage as poetically (emotionally) as we can:

The day is cold, and dark, and dreary;  
 It rains, and the wind is never weary;  
 The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,  
 But at every gust the dead leaves fall,  
 And the day is dark and dreary.

John Masfield's "Tomorrow," with its Anglo-Saxon spirit, its balanced lines, its changing mood in the refrain, likewise has its upward lifting movements bolstered and supported, at just the proper points, by the recurrence of accented syllables.


Let us repeat: *Poetry is the rhythmic expression in rhythmic language of rhythmic poetic emotions.* Meter (metrical rhythm) enhances and supports the organic rhythm of language in which poetic ideas and emotions are expressed.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE LANGUAGE OF POËTRY

#### POETIC DICTION AND POETIC PHRASE

OD will forgive me—that's his business,"<sup>1</sup> said the passionately sincere but not infrequently irritating Heine when a self-exiled outcast in France. "I am no longer a divine biped," said he, "no longer the Great Heathen No. 2 . . . smiling gaily on the melancholy Nazarenes. I am now only a poor sick Jew." Commenting on his bitter experiences while a self-exile in his own native land, Germany, he asserted, "Already in my cradle was the line of march laid down for all my life. . . . At the very first move I lost the queen—but persistently I still play on." When he published some of his later poems, he said, "I do not know whether my present poems are better than the earlier ones. But this is certain: they are much sadder and sweeter, like pain dipped in honey." Usually it is only when life's bitter experiences have galled us to the very quick that we speak the truth that is in us. Seldom do we get a man's actual self until he is provoked. Not infre-

<sup>1</sup> Lewis Browne's *That Man Heine*.

quently severe truth; the essential ego, the sincere self is expressed with bitterness. "There is the man *and* his virtues," wrote Emerson. "The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression."

Poetry, we have seen in earlier chapters, results from our inability to express to the full the impulsive crying out of the potential that lives in every fiber of the human being. The poet Bailey, in his "Festus," declared:

Poetry is itself a thing of God.  
He made his prophets poets, and the more  
We feel of Poesy do we become  
Like God in love and power.

"It [poetry] begins," says Robert Frost, "with a lump in the throat; a homesickness or a lovesickness. It is a reaching out toward expression; an effort to find fulfilment. A complete poem is one where an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found the words." The deepest and most exalting emotions have never been expressed; the most ennobling music has never been sung, for they are buried too deep in the soul of man ever to be set free. We have vision and aspiration, but we have no reach comparable to attain. Utterance that is the very fullest that we can command is, after all, only a feeble and shadowy image of the soul; and every language, in a measure, is something of a foreign language to the heart of man. Always the creative artist is insurgent against the medium which he must use. Ever he is instinctively pushing against the current. The very language that the poet uses is his greatest hindrance to his full expression. The flood-gate, as it were, is set against the flood. The machinery of language is inadequate to his demand on it to serve him in his hour of utmost need.



Tennyson, in common with all poets, felt keenly the inadequacy of language:

I sometimes hold it half a sin  
To put in words the grief I feel;  
For words, like nature, half reveal  
And half conceal the Soul within.

And when the creative poet has made the most effective use of language that any human being could possibly make, he is obliged still to feel the utter inadequacy of what he has written. The loss of heightened and exalting emotional value as it passes from poet to reader via the medium of written discourse is so great that the experience is given in outline and no more. To quote from the same passage in Tennyson:

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,  
Like coarsest clothes against the cold,  
But the large grief which these enfold  
Is given in outline and no more.<sup>2</sup>

The creative poet, thus, is ever experiencing a sad sincerity, a sweet bitterness, as the poetic urge from within struggles to break through the restraining shackles of language. Once in a while, but for him all too seldom, his thoughts and emotions do succeed in breaking through.

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and escaped.<sup>3</sup>

Our greatest poetry is written in a mood of dissatisfaction. It is an eager leaping up to God with an impatient feeling,

<sup>2</sup> *In Memoriam*, v.

<sup>3</sup> Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

like Faustus, that heavy lead weights on his heels hold him back. And it is for this very feeling that we are the richer: our great poets, for all their handicap, actually write better than they know.

The hand that rounded Peter's dome,  
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome,  
Wrought in a sad sincerity;  
Himself from God he could not free;  
He builded better than he knew—  
The conscious stone to beauty grew.<sup>4</sup>

To the impulse to utter, the creative mind—the poet—adds the artistic consciousness, that elusive and subtle impulse which causes the artist to scorn everything but the finest. However, even at its best, language—any language—is to him an imperfect and an inadequate medium for the expression and communication of his highest thoughts and emotions.

But the poetic mind, in expressing and communicating itself to its public, is actually under a much greater handicap than merely the inadequacy of the language medium. The poet has even a greater obstacle to surmount than this. In earlier chapters it has been pointed out that, while a poet communicates ideas and emotions, emotions are his first and chief concern. But emotions, so our psychologists assert, are not and cannot be expressed or communicated in terms of themselves. Indeed they remind us that emotion cannot be expressed at all. There are no pure images of feelings in their abstract form. Emotion, we are told, is not a physical thing, not a process, not a functioning, not even a mental activity: rather it is a condition, a status quo, of the nerve

<sup>4</sup> Emerson's "The Problem."

centers. It is a status quo of unstable équilibre in the nerve centers resulting from the inability of our motor musculature equipment to express to the full the incoming sensory impressions.<sup>5</sup> Our awareness of this inability is the condition in the nerve centers when we say we feel or experience emotion. And yet, despite the handicap that a poet cannot express his emotions as such, the poet nevertheless must, as it were, communicate emotion to us, for poetry begins in emotions and ends in emotions.

Who claims my tears, must first display his own,  
Then shall I catch his pangs and share his moan.  
But if ye rant as if no grief were nigh,  
If in your speech your sufferings ye belie,  
Ye exiled heroes! mauger all your woes,  
'T is ten to one I either laugh or doze.<sup>6</sup>

Poetry is not poetry until it reaches the other person and provokes him to the pre-intended emotional reaction.

Since the poet cannot express or communicate his emotions in terms of themselves or cannot express them at all, seemingly he is hard put to the task of resorting to some other way by which he can reach his public. Fortunately our emotions are always directly associated with our actual concrete happenings and experiences. If happenings and experiences are repeated and presented to us as readers, we again, in our reaction to them, "feel," as it were, the same emotion. Accordingly, the poet who would provoke his reader to experiencing emotion has a ready though not always easy way of doing this very thing: he can present to his reader con-

<sup>5</sup> See chapter i, the section on "The Creative Impulse," for discussion and citation of authorities who support this theory of emotion.

<sup>6</sup> Horace's *Art of Poetry*, Cook's edition, page 8.

etc pictures and images via language in such manner that in the very emotional condition (the identical status quo in the nerve centers) he desires to awaken will obtain in his reader's nerve centers. "If I am asked to call up an image of a rose," says Professor Fairchild, "of a tree, of a cloud, or of a sky-ark, I can readily do it; but if I am asked to feel loneliness or sorrow, to feel hatred or jealousy, or to feel joy on the return of spring, I cannot readily do it. And the reason why I cannot do it is because I can call up no image of any one of these feelings. For everything I come to know through my senses, for everything in connection with what I do, think, or feel I can call up some kind of mental image; but for no kind of feeling itself can I ever possibly have a direct image. The only effective way of arousing any particular feeling that is more than mere bodily feeling is to call up the images that are naturally connected with that feeling." By the poet's presenting to us his own ideas and emotions in terms of concrete images of experiences that we may have had we are ourselves provoked, as we say, to emotional functioning. In this way, it may be said, the poet expresses and communicates to us his emotions; that is, the creative poet, through his concrete pictures and images, leads us to see what he sees and to sense what he senses, with the result that we function emotionally as he has functioned.

Perhaps the most significant thing that distinguishes the creative poet-mind from the uncreative mind is his instinctive ability, quickly, spontaneously, and seemingly without effort, to see or feel his emotions in terms of concrete experiences. "What," it was questioned to Blake, "when the sun

<sup>1</sup> Fairchild's *The Making of Poetry*, pages 24, 25. See Rickert's *New Methods for the Study of Literature*, chapter ii, "Imagery," and chapter iii, "Words."

rises, do you not see a round disk of fire something like guinea? ' "Oh! no, no!" replied he; "I see 'an immeasurable company of the heavenly host, crying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!'"<sup>9</sup> "See how my sword weeps for the poor king's death," a poet has a gladiator sa who has killed his king. An old Anglo-Saxon, feeling the zea of the sword to cut home, wrote, "The battle-gleam wa willing to bite." Likewise: "The ash beam hurried to its home." "The creative mind sees and feels things in terms of equivalents, in terms of analogies, in terms of resemblances, in terms of experiential<sup>9</sup> images. Even the early Church Fathers, eager to make clear to the faithful the exaltingly spiritual aspects of the Christian faith, made frequent use of the several parts of the human body and of a Gothic Cathedral: "the towers are prayer, the columns are apostles, the stones and mortar the assembly of the faithful; the windows are the organs of sense, the buttresses and abutments are divine assistance, etc."<sup>10</sup> Powerless to express ideas and emotions in terms of themselves, the creative poet seeks to suggest them to us by hints, as it were:

In tingling impotence the Dauber drew  
As all men draw, keen to the soul  
To give a hint that might suggest the whole.<sup>11</sup>

Dhan Gopal Mukerji, feeling the glorious beauty of an oriental sunrise, in his poem, "Sunrise," never mentioned

<sup>9</sup> Blake, "The Vision of Judgment."

<sup>9</sup> Bliss Perry's *A Study of Poetry*, chapter iv, "The Poet's Words," page 102.

<sup>10</sup> Ribot's *The Creative Imagination*, page 230.

<sup>11</sup> John Masefield's *Dauber*.

"glory" or "beauty" or even "sun." He felt his emotion and saw it in terms of a blossom. He hinted it to us:

O thou blossom of Eastern Silence.

The creative poet is the one who instinctively takes skilful advantage of the resources his language gives to him. That is what Shakespeare did—and Dante and Homer and scores of others who have enriched our world.

"Poetry," wrote Leigh Hunt, "begins where matter of fact or of science ceases to be merely such, and to exhibit a further truth; that is to say, the connection it has with the world of emotion, and its power to produce imaginative pleasure. Inquiring of a gardener, for instance, what flower it is we see yonder, he answers, 'A lily.' This is matter of fact. The botanist pronounces it to be of the order of *Hexandria monogynia*. This is matter of science. It is the '*lady*' of the garden, says Spenser; and here we begin to have a poetical sense of its fairness and grace. It is

'The plant and flower of light.'

Says Ben Jonson: 'and poetry then shows us the beauty of the flower in all its mystery and splendor.'"<sup>12</sup> With fact per se and for its own sake the poet has little to do; but with fact and concrete experience with which to give emotion embodiment, he has everything to do. In "Sir Eger, Sir Graham, and Sir Gray-Steel," the author does not have Sir Eger say that he feels that he is disgraced in his mistress' eyes. That would be abstract fact. Rather the poet "objectifies" the emotion:

<sup>12</sup> *What Is Poetry?*

"If it be so,  
Then wot I well I must forego  
Love-liking, and manhood, all clean."  
The water rushed out of his een.<sup>18</sup>

Poetic diction,<sup>14</sup> then, does not exist for itself but always for what it suggests, for what it reminds us of.

In truth the poet's mind functions objectively rather than subjectively; that is, he projects from him, so to speak, his

See Ellis' *Specimens*, or Laing's *Early Metrical Tales*.

For discussion of poetic diction, see. Lowes's *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*, chapter v, "The Diction in Poetry versus Poetic Diction"; Eastman's *The Enjoyment of Poetry*, chapters i-iv, Perry's *A Study of Poetry*, chapter iv, "The Poet's Words", Cowl's *Theory of Poetry in England*, "Style and Diction," pages 187-223, Hudson Maxim's *The Science of Poetry and the Philosophy of Language*, Fairchild's *The Making of Poetry*, chapters iii, iv, Hunt's *Literature, Its Principles and Problems*, Part I, chapter vii, Part II, chapters iii, vi, vii, Leigh Hunt's *What Is Poetry?*, Hazlitt's *On Poetry in General*, Wordsworth's preface to his *Lyrical Ballads*, Raymond's *Poetry as a Representative Art*, chapters viii-xxviii, Poe's review of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *The Drama of Exile and Other Poems* (1845); Robert Bridges' *Poetry and Poetic Diction*, under the title, "The Necessity of Poetry", Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, chapter xi, pages 174-186, and chapter xiii, "Symbols and Figures", Arnold's *The Study of Poetry* and his *Essay on Wordsworth*; Wilkinson's *New Voices*, pages 112-145; Aristotle's *Poetics*, Connell's *A Study of Poetry*, Lamborn's *The Rudiments of Criticism*, Bradley's *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*; Alexander's *Poetry and the Individual*, Sherman's *Analytics of Literature*, Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*; Horace, Boileau, and Vida, *The Art of Poetry*.

See Wyatt's "Conversational Poetry," *The Dial*, October 1920, Jepson's "Words and the Poet," *Poetry*, May 1917; "Poetry Viewed as the Language of Ecstasy," *Current Opinion*, February 1922; Marolf's "Imperishable Elements of Poetry," *The Dial*, September 1915; Woodberry's "The Language of All the World," *The Torch*, 1905.

See the most recent study in diction: Rickert's *New Methods for Study of Literature*, chapter ii, "Imagery"; chapter iii, "Words"; and chapter vi, "Tone Patterns."

ideas and emotions into what, to him and to us, are actual human experiences — impressions and happenings. "The flower opens its eyes," cried out the little child who felt the emotion of delight at seeing an unfolding pansy. "My love is like a red, red rose," said Burns when he projected to a concrete image his heartfelt affection for the Scottish lass he loved. Warner, an old Elizabethan poet, in expressing his feeling of brutality when Queen Eleanor struck a blow to the sweet mouth of Fair Rosamond, projected that emotion into a concrete picture of the actual striking. *We* see the striking: *we* react to it: *we* feel his emotion:

With that she dasht her on the lippes, so dyed double red.  
Hard was the heart that gave the blow, soft were those  
lips that bled.

"I had the habit," said Jean Ingelow, "of attributing intelligence not only to all living creatures, the same amount and kind of intelligence that I had myself, but even to stone and manufactured articles. I used to tell how dull it must be for the pebble in the causeway to be obliged to lie still and only see what was round about." "The poets," declared Daudet, "are men who still see with the age of childhood." "Poetry," asserted Masson, "is the art of producing a fictitious concrete" of our emotions. With fact per se, with "abstractions the poet has nothing to do, save to take them and turn them into concreteness," held Theodore Watts. "Genius," in poetry, said Baudelaire, "is nothing but childhood recovered at will." The ancient Hebrew mind was essentially poetic, because its very inmost ideas and feelings were always projected outward into the concrete experiences of life. Just as the child says "The grass is crying," or "The fire is eating the log," so the ancient man of Judea said of



intoxicating wine, "It biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." Thus Milton said, "Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen"; Tennyson, "Come, my friends, 't is not too late to seek a newer world"; and, in *Hyperion*, we have the poet project his sadness into the concrete picture, "But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest"—as intense a line and as poetic a one as any in the English language. The theme of a poem (its fundamental and underlying dominant emotion) may derive from any man and may belong to all mankind. But only the creative poetic mind can give this spirit a body woven of objectified images. When the theme of a poem has thus been clothed with this body, when emotion has been projected, as it were, from our subjective self outward into concrete objective impressions and happenings, they become real to us and in our reaction to them we experience a neural status quo which we know as emotion. This is the supreme achievement of the artist. )

That this is the operation of the poet's mind is illustrated by every real poet that has given his finished product to the world. Tennyson, always a hater of pose and of supposed differences in social caste, in "Edwin Morris," does not have the disappointed lover say "I was disgusted with it all," but rather clothes and exemplifies the emotion in

And in one month  
They wedded her to sixty thousand pounds,  
To lands in Kent and messuages in York,  
And slight Sir Robert with his watery smile  
And educated whisker.

In *In Memoriam* (xxi), he does not say "I am sad for the loss of my friend, Arthur Hallam," but he conveys to us two projected pictures of two mother birds which, by con-

trast to each other, provoke in us the reaction that results in deepest pathos:

And one is glad; her note is gay,  
For now her little ones have ranged,  
And one is sad, her note is changed,  
Because her brood is stolen away.

Walt Whitman did not say that he was grief-stricken at the death of Lincoln: he projected his anguish of heart to

But O heart! heart! heart!  
O the bleeding drops of red  
Where on the deck my Captain lies  
Fallen cold and dead.

When Juliet is horrified at the idea of being compelled by her father to marry Paris, whom she does not love, Shakespeare does not have her say she is horrified or shocked; rather he has her place before us such things as in themselves are horrible and repulsive:

O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,  
From off the battlements of yonder tower,  
Or walk in thievish ways, or bid me lurk  
Where serpents are, chain me with roaring bears,  
Or hide me nightly in a charnel-house,  
O'ercover'd quite with dead men's rattling bones,  
With reeky shanks, and yellow chapless skulls,  
Or bid me go into a new-made grave,  
And hide me with a dead man in his shroud,  
Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble;  
And I will do it without fear or doubt,  
To live an unstain'd wife to my sweet love.

When Brutus quarrels with Cassius and grows indig<sup>man</sup>tly angry, Shakespeare does not have his Brutus say "I am

indignantly angry with you, Cassius." That would be but abstraction. But he does have Brutus express his testy humor in words that state experiences which all of us have felt and seen in our lives:

Fret till your proud heart break;  
Go show your slaves how choleric you are,  
And make your bondmen tremble. Must I budge?  
Must I observe you? Must I stand out and crouch  
Under your testy humor? By the Gods,  
You shall digest the venom of your spleen  
Tho' it do split you; for from this day forth  
I'll use you for my mirth—yea, for my laughter—  
When you are waspish.

Nausea is a feeling that in terms of itself is abstraction. To say "I am nauseated" is to utter pure, abstract prose. But to give the concrete thing in experiential words that actually nauseate us is the work of an artist. John Masefield can do it, as will be seen on a single reading of an excerpt of his. This selection is not mere cheap, repulsive realism. Masefield's intent was to have us feel as he felt. How admirably he succeeds!

For three long hours of gin and smokes,  
And two girls' breath and fifteen blokes,  
A warmish night, and windows shut,  
The room stank like a fox's gut,  
The heat and smell of drinking deep  
Began to stun the gang to sleep.  
Some snored it sodden where they sat.  
Dick Twot had lost a tooth and wept  
But all the drunken others slept.  
Jane slept beside me in the chair,  
And I got up; I wanted air.

Poetic value aside, projected images and concrete experiences serve a strictly practical end. They are a ready and easy way by which the poet may reach his reader. Using them instead of abstractions is but applying the law of economy of attention.<sup>15</sup> The poet not only expresses himself but also is obliged to communicate himself. As Wordsworth held, poetry must give rise to "immediate pleasure."

My council to the budding bard  
Is, "Don't be long" and "Don't be hard."  
Your "gentle public," my good friend,  
Won't read what they can't comprehend.<sup>16</sup>

All too many of us are under the misleading notion that if a piece of literature is vague or indistinct in meaning or difficult to understand, the element of greatness certainly must reside in it. We fail to recognize that all genuinely creative work is but a problem in economy of means to an end—a problem in actually being clear to the reader. Vague abstractions in diction and phrase are intangible and indefinite. On the other hand, concrete and objective images and happenings come to our consciousness immediately and manifestly. We know them as old acquaintances; we recognize them at once. We know the concrete images personally because we have experienced them. Thus the pang of a remembered love-sorrow is communicated to us almost the instant we read Burns's

Had 'we never lov'd sae kindly,  
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,

<sup>15</sup> See Spencer's *Philosophy of Style* and the author's *Effective Writing*, chapter ii, "Clearness."

<sup>16</sup> Austin Dobson's "Advice to a Poet."

Never met—or never parted—  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Little time is lost in our getting the projected picture of Lilia in Tennyson's *The Princess* and in feeling our consequent reactions to it:

Petulant she spoke, and at herself she laughed;  
A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,  
And sweet as English air could make her, she!

The futility of sadness is not very effectively communicated to us when the poet merely writes,

Weep no more, lady, weep no more,  
Thy sorrow is in vain.

Indeed there is but little poetry—and consequently little poetic diction—in this. But when the poet projected his feeling into an objectified image of plucked violets that no showers, however sweet, could ever make grow again, he communicated his theme (emotion) to us instantly. We get immediate pleasure, for we instantly recognize the symbols:

Weep no more, lady, weep no more,  
Thy sorrow is in vain;  
For violets pluckt the sweetest showers,  
Will ne'er make grow again.<sup>17</sup>

To us such things as "mountain," "plain," "chair," "seasons," "knee," "children," "sire," "grandfather," "dawn," and such acts as "sat," "played," etc., are quite familiar. When Emily Dickinson, in her "The Mountain," wished to convey to us the benevolent spirit of the mountain, even

<sup>17</sup> Beaumont and Fletcher, copied into "Friar of Orders Gray."

though she allowed some rather large abstract words to appear, she wasted little of our time or energy in giving us the projected concrete picture. We apprehend and comprehend instantly:

## THE MOUNTAIN

The mountain sat upon the plain  
In his eternal chair,  
His observations omnifold,  
His inquest everywhere.

The seasons played around his knees,  
Like children round a sire;  
Grandfather of the days is he,  
Of dawn the ancestor.

"The poet," observed Wordsworth, "writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a man. . . . Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the poet's art."<sup>18</sup> Poetic diction, diction that presents to us concrete and tangible imagery, is a most ready way by which the author may communicate himself immediately and effectively to his public.

But let us remind ourselves that concrete diction is not, in and of itself, inherently poetic. We require that our best prose shall also be concrete; indeed concreteness is the very quality that we urge for good prose. Even in expressing the most abstract philosophical thought, we require, as nearly as

<sup>18</sup> "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads*.

we can, that it shall be communicated to us in terms of the objective. Concreteness in poetic diction is in itself no guaranty of excellence. Certainly no one would care to hold that Wordsworth's

A household tub, like one of those  
Which women use to wash their clothes

is anything but prose. Certainly it provokes no condition of the emotional state so essential in good poetry. On the contrary, this passage gives us an image only but no image that is suggestive, interpretative, or connotative. Nor would anyone seriously contend that Browning's

The quick sharp scratch  
And blue spurt of a lighted match

is anything more than excellent prose. Its effect, like the lines from Wordsworth, is complete with the mere sensory visualization. It is purely imagist and no more. It provokes no reaction in our nerve centers that we identify as emotion. To cite authority for such phrasing in verse avails us naught. It may be

Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,  
No gaudy ware like Gandolph's second line—  
Tully, my masters.

as Browning's bishop<sup>19</sup> insisted his should be; but, if it does no more than merely present images, it is not the language of exalting poetry.

Poems of high attempt and promise vast  
Oft dwindle to a dreary void at last,

<sup>19</sup> "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church."

With here and there a purple remnant found  
Tagged on to throw a tawdry glare around.<sup>20</sup>

The moment, however, that we read Chaucer's description of the dwelling of his Reeve, we get something more than just imagist sensory impressions.

His wonying was ful fair upon the heeth;  
With greene trees i-shadwed was his place.

And still something more than just imagery in Tennyson's

One last look on the white-wall'd tower,  
And the little gray church on the windy shore.

And much more, very much more, in Shakespeare's

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast  
That sucks the nurse to sleep.

Or in his King Lear's

The little dogs and all, Tray, Blanche,  
And Sweetheart, see they bark at me.

We get the image direct and immediately and, in addition, the terrible pathos of it all!

A strangely erroneous notion as to the nature of poetic diction and phrase has obtained all too long in the popular mind. We have heard much about the Grand Style, as if there were some one definite poetic style from which there must be no deviation if the poet's work is to pass muster. Spenser, we now know, indulged notoriously archaic diction. When his *Shepherd's Calender* appeared, E.K., in the "Epistle Dedicatory," wrote thus: "In my opinion it is one

<sup>20</sup> Horace's *Art of Poetry*, Cook's edition, page 2.



specail prayer of ~~man~~, whych are dew to this Poete, that he hath laboured to restore, as to theyr rightful heritage, such good and natural English words, as have been long time out of use, and almost cleane disherited." On reading Spenser, Ben Jonson tersely commented, "Spenser, in affecting the ancients, writ no language." Theodore W. Hunt revived the idea that "Poetic diction is first of all figurative, known under various names as symbolic, pictorial, descriptive, or graphic, etc."

From the creative point of view, no peculiar merit attaches to any archaic forms, though unskilled poets may think so. The chances are that any writer who apes and selects the diction of another poet, be that poet world-famed, will not be much of a poet: a creative poet must set forth *his* ideas and emotions in *his* way and not in the way of another. Absolutely the only test of the poetic quality of a word is its ability to hold its own triumphantly in its particular poetic setting. In such a case, if an archaic word is intelligible and if it produces the very effect the poet desires to produce, that word is good poetic gold. Obviously, in any language, some words secure the coveted effect more effectively than others: they are latently and potentially poetic, but, even then, only where used in groups or phrases. "Use words," held Edwin Markham, "that have been lavendered by time and are therefore surrounded by an atmosphere of association and suggestion." Shakespeare's diction is marvelously suggestive; yet he used no special or topical vocabulary. Nor did he in any wise exhaust the possibilities of the English vocabulary at his disposal in his time; out of something more than 200,000 words, he used only about 18,000, and the King James Bible, with all its poetic diction, utilizes only some 7,200 words. Really poetic words are those which

'carry heavily freighted meanings, enlarged connotations, etc., with unconscious ease and smoothness. "For it is the successful blending of the undefined and the definite in words that constitutes the triumph of the poet's art. . . . Poetry may be poetry, then, and the loftiest at that, without employing the diction which we call poetic. Its richest store lies within and not without the tract that it holds in common with prose. . . . The whole question of poetic diction has been confused by isolating it from the fundamental facts of usage."<sup>21</sup>

Few words, perhaps none, are inherently poetic or unpoetic. Poetic diction may or may not be different from everyday prose. Words are a part of the poetic whole of the poem taken as a unit, and are elevated along with the spirit of the poem: the words will be poetic or unpoetic in ratio as the poem itself is high or low in poetic value. Words, in poetry, are thus not quite confined to exact meanings. The "beauty of words consists in the images they present," Aristotle reminds us. "For beautiful words are in deed and in poet the very light of the spirit," says Longinus. In any instance mere wordiness, verbosity, however rich, is superfluous poetical luggage. "In the style of poetry," opines Joubert in one of his *Pensées*, "each word reverberates like the note of a well-tuned lyre, and always leaves behind it a multitude of vibrations." Since language—made up of words and phrases—is practically the sole means by which an author can express and communicate himself, to any poet who holds his vocation in honor words are sacred. Great poets increase the resources of language not by coining new words but by revealing the full powers of old ones.

<sup>21</sup> Lowes' *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*, pages 183, 184, 187.

But we are obliged to look elsewhere than to the individual words themselves for the real secret of poetic diction. Not only does the poet not have any monopoly on the material and spirit of poetry, but the very diction also that he uses is, for the most part, not in itself poetic. An examination of many pages of Shakespeare, Shelley, and Tennyson shows us that it is possible for a poet to reach the highest flights of eloquent poetry without resorting to the so-called poetical terms. (The poet uses practically the same vocabulary that we use; the chief difference is that he knows and feels his words to a degree that we do not.) Words, in themselves, usually are dull, dry, inane things that do not leap into consciousness until combined into phrases and suffused with the strong emotional values of the poet's mind and heart. Merely using and combining words into metrical lines, rimed forms, and stanza structure, will not make the diction poetical even if the words themselves are more poetical than usual. Words, in whatever order and combination, are not poetical until they are lighted up and rendered moving and vivid by the poetic idea and emotion of the poem. Indeed it is the poetry behind and in the poem that most often makes the diction seem poetical.

Surely there is not much poetic diction in the words, single or combined, of so simple a question as "Sweet, you ask me why I love you?" And there is even less poetic diction in a query like "What makes me worship at your feet?" In these two sentences only "sweet" and "worship" are not altogether commonplace. If we suggest, "Tell me why the hawthorn tree produced blossoms that are before us," we use pretty much plain prose. Again if we ask, "Tell me why those thrushes are making music for your ear," we still have prose. And if we inquire, "Tell me why the sky is blue,"

we have made a fequest in prose. Finally, if we add, "Perhaps I'll answer you," we are still using prose. But if a poet (Wayne Gard) or a lover feels so deeply about his affection for another and experiences the feeling of exaltation at so beautiful and so holy a love even because he cannot explain why he loves; and if, in asking these same questions, he rearranges the word order a bit, adds a word or two here and there to make all metrical, combines the phrases into rimed couplets, and above all suffuses the whole with his deep emotion, he instantly, as by a magical transformation, turns the expressions into poetry; and the diction, heretofore rather commonplace, becomes highly poetical. *The words are tinged with the poetical because of the poetry behind the poem.*

## SONG

You ask me why I love you, sweet?  
What makes me worship at your feet?

Then tell me why this hawthorn tree  
Produced the blossoms that you see,

And tell me why these thrushes here  
Are making music for your ear,

And tell me why the sky is blue—  
And then, perhaps, I'll answer you.

Such things as "falling snow," "the mouth of one just dead," "the hour before dawn," are not of themselves poetic either in individual words or in combinations. But when they are introduced by

These be  
Three silent things:

and are arranged in a certain climactic order by Adelaide Crapsey, under the impulse of love and sorrow, the words and the phrases flash into the highest kind of poetry. Even the typographical arrangement adds to the poetic intensity.

## TRIAD

These be  
Three silent things.  
The falling snow . . . the hour  
Before the dawn . . . the mouth of one  
Just dead.

When Isaiah of old, in his passionate zeal and religious devotion to Jehovah, called aloud to the nations of the earth to come and serve the true and living God, he employed the simplest of words in the most simple combinations. It is really very striking how simplified and direct is his utterance. There is scarcely a noticeable inversion in our entire translation. Neither the diction nor the subject-matter is essentially poetic. However, when Isaiah cried out to the people of the earth, he was aroused to a high pitch of holy exaltation. He speaks to us even as one having authority. We are moved in our hearts because he was moved in his heart. Everything he says, every word and phrase he employs, takes on a new significance. His spirit was an exaltingly poetic one; and this spirit in the poem makes the diction poetic. The words had been dead, but now they are come alive again!

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,  
And he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat;  
Yea, come, buy wine and milk,  
Without money and without price.

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?  
 And your labor for that which satisfieth not?  
 Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good,  
 And let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Incline your ear, and come unto me;  
 Hear, and your soul shall live:  
 And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,  
 Even the sure mercies of David.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found,  
 Call ye upon him while he is near:  
 Let the wicked forsake his way,  
 And the unrighteous man his thoughts.

And let him return unto the Lord,  
 And he will have mercy upon him;  
 And to our God,  
 For he will abundantly pardon.

For ye shall go out with joy,  
 And be led forth with peace:  
 The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into  
 singing,  
 And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree,  
 And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.  
 And it shall be to the Lord for a name,  
 For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

It must be obvious, then, that practically an entire poem,  
 so far as its diction is concerned, may be mostly prose until  
 a given line or a few lines pulsating with deep thought and

feeling suddenly transform the whole into quickening poetry of the highest order. It is not infrequent that these lines are about all the essential poetry there is in the entire poem. That is, not all the diction nor all the phrasing in a given bit of verse are of poetic order; on the contrary, in most instances a poem has only spots of real poetry and these spots or "purple patches" are easily detected. Winifred M. Letts, in her "The Spires of Oxford," gives us in the first four lines of each stanza little more than pretty picture effects. Then suddenly in the last two lines of each stanza, and particularly in the last two lines of the last stanza, she puts her real thought and feeling into her expression. There lines make the entire poem, each stanza, and the very diction and phrasing poetic.) Here is where we are made to feel the glorious sacrifice of Oxford men in the World War. We are exalted in our hearts; and, because of our exaltation, when we re-read the poem we put exaltation into the words that are the means whereby the author expresses herself and communicates herself to us. Thus, under the impulsion of poetic fervor, *we* make the diction poetic. Here it is:

#### THE SPIRES OF OXFORD

I saw the spires of Oxford  
As I was passing by,  
The gray spires of Oxford  
Against the pearl-gray sky.  
My heart was with the Oxford men  
Who went abroad to die.

The years go fast in Oxford,  
The golden years and gay,  
The hoary Colleges look down  
On careless boys at play;

But when the bugles sounded war  
They put their games away.

They left the peaceful river,  
The cricket field, the squad,  
The shaven lawns of Oxford,  
To seek a bloody sod—  
They gave their merry youth away  
For country and for God.

God rest you, happy gentlemen,  
Who laid your good lives down,  
Who took the khaki and the gun  
Instead of cap and gown.  
God bring you to a fairer place  
Than even Oxford town.

The secret, then, of poetic diction is that the theme (emotion) of the poem as a whole shall be sustained and exalting. Indeed, only as the sustained emotion is exalting in a poem as a whole is its diction poetic. A few purple patches here and there—however excellent in themselves—do not retrieve a bad poem to the status of a good one. It is the very presence of this exalting element that determines the degree of intensity of the poetic quality in a poem; indeed it is the primary factor that differentiates poetry from prose. There can be no poetic river of expression if there is not first a lake of emotional thought and feeling somewhere in the mountains of poetic truth. If the emotional current runs strong, there are few words which it cannot carry with it. "So far as high poetic truth and seriousness are wanting to a poet's matter and substance, so far also, we may be sure, will a high poetic stamp of diction and move-



ment be wanting to his style and manner. In proportion as this high stamp of diction and movement, again, is absent from a poet's style and manner, we shall find, also, that high poetic truth and seriousness are absent from his substance and manner."<sup>22</sup> There is, thus, a direct reciprocity between heightened and sustained emotion and poetic diction and phrase. A new virtue, an ennobling feeling, must be behind the otherwise prosaic words, else they do not leap into poetry. Truth must be carried alive and vigorous into the heart by passion. True it is that

Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,  
Stains the white radiance of eternity.

And it is only via human speech, words, phrases, and sentences, that we can reveal, or even give the least hint to our reader what spark of divinity there may be in our souls. But only as that divinity is potently active and eager for expression do the words that we use suddenly leap into the living, flash into the poetic. Both the spirit of a poem and its diction are always highly individual: they are the divine spark, so to speak, that cannot take its utterance at second-hand from another: out of his own mouth the poet uttereth wisdom. A selection already quoted is again in point:

Who cares how bad my painting may be? I  
Mean to go on, and, if I fail, to try.  
However much I miss of my intent,  
If I have done my best I'll be content.  
You cannot understand that. Let it be.  
You cannot understand, nor know, nor share.  
This is a matter touching only me,  
My sketch may be a daub, for aught I care.

<sup>22</sup> Arnold's *The Study of Poetry*.

You may be right. But even if you were,  
Your mocking should not stop this work of mine;  
Not though it be, its prompting is divine.<sup>28</sup>

Only, then, as the poetic mood in a poem carries us far out into the realm of the universal, into "the fringed edge of nothing," are a poem and its diction poetic. Only as we lose consciousness of our physical self and our physical surroundings and function emotionally as one with the dominant emotion of the poem are we in the realm of the exaltingly poetic. The purple patches of our best poets again and again lead us into this mood that no one can explain, that there is no need to explain. It is the moment of supreme excellence. We wait breathlessly with the lover in Tennyson's "Maud," for his love:

There has fallen a splendid tear  
From the passion flower at the gate.  
She is coming, my dove, my dear;  
She is coming, my life, my fate.  
The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near";  
And the white rose weeps, "She is late":  
The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear";  
And the lily whispers, "I wait."

In Shakespeare, our heart, too, in tragic fervor breaks with the cast-out and utterly forsaken Lear's:

Pray do not mock me:  
I am a very foolish fond old man,  
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;  
And, to deal plainly,  
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

<sup>28</sup> John Maschfield's *Dauber*.

"Tragic poetry, which is the most impassioned species of it, strives to carry on the feeling to the utmost point of sublimity or pathos, by all the force of comparison or contrast; loses the sense of present suffering in the imaginary exaggeration of it; exhausts the terror or pity by an unlimited indulgence of it; grapples with impossibilities in its desperate impatience of restraint; throws us back upon the past, forward into the future, brings every moment of our being or object of nature in startling review before us; and in the rapid whirl of events, lifts us from the 'depths of woe to the highest contemplations on human life.'"<sup>24</sup>

#### TONE AND TONE-COLOR

Emotion, in itself, is not poetry, but the cause of poetry: emotional expression is poetry only when it takes inviting form—beautiful form! To exist as poetry, emotion must be translated into appropriate garb, into the best phrasing any given language is capable of affording, into melody. The images may be alluring or they may be terrible or even saddening, but still the phrasing must be beautiful in its fitness. The greatest mystery of creative poetry is its power to invest the saddest things of life with a noble and exalting beauty. The sadness of past romantic love may be made entrancingly beautiful by the very images and phrasing through which it is communicated to us.

When I was young as you are young,  
When lutes were touched, and songs were sung,  
And love lamps in the windows hung . . . .

The spirit of true poetry makes jewels out of flints and shards. "For beautiful words," held Longinus, "~~are in deed~~

<sup>24</sup> Hazlitt, "On Poetry in General."

(and in poet the very light of the spirit." Always, there is a much finer and more subtle beauty and melody in poetry than mere rhythms, line-lengths, meter, and rime alone can impart or contribute. Much of it lies in the poet's instinctive and conscious artistic choice of melodious words and their arrangement into subtle harmonies. It may appear in vigorous words, grouped in short line-lengths, expressing vigorous emotion:

Marching along  
Fifty score strong,  
Great-hearted Englishmen  
Singing this song.

Or it may be soothing words and phrases, arranged in longer line-lengths, expressing moody and soothing emotions:

Music that brings sweet sleep down the blissful skies  
Music that gentler on the spirit lies  
Than tired eyelids on tired eyes.

Or it may be light and airy words and phrases, in irregular and dancing meter, expressing a fancy-like mood:

Diaphenia like the daffadoundilly  
White as the sun, fair as a lilly,  
Heigh ho! how I do love thee.

Or it may be pathetically restrained words, in long line-lengths, that express a passionate and hopeless yearning:

Hame, hame, hame, O hame fain wad I be—  
O hame, hame, hame, to my ain countree.

Or it may be simple and concrete words of color, in short line-lengths and intensified rimes, that express sadness:

Three ducks on a pond,  
 A green bank beyond,  
 The blue sky of Spring,  
 White clouds on the wing.  
 Oh, what a little thing  
 To remember for years  
 To remember with tears.

Or it may be sweet, luscious words, in iambic pentameter couplets, that express an almost purely aesthetic mood of almost abstract beauty:

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
 Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,  
 Quite over-canopi'd with luscious woodbine,  
 With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine.

Tone and tone-color obtain in every piece of creative poetic utterance: tone in the poem as a whole and tone-color, for the most part, in the "purple patches."

Every good poem has a dominant underlying mood or, tone that pervades it. Since a poem is always the result of a sustained and exalting rhythmic emotional flow, it follows that a good poem is first of all characterized by that emotional value obtaining throughout the poem. The stanzas or strophes of a poem, so to speak, are threaded on a dominant mood.

In short, to mark this maxim never cease—  
 Let all you write be one and of a piece.

. . . . .  
 Or keep your fancy-piece throughout the same.

. . . . .  
 And keep one constant tenor to the end.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Horace's *Art of Poetry* (Cook's edition), pages 2, 9; and Vida's *Art of Poetry* (Cook's edition), page 81.

A piece of music is in one key. "The musician speaks on the note he sings with; there is no change in the scale, as he diminishes the volume into familiar discourse."<sup>26</sup> A ruling passion runs through every piece of imaginative work. Everything vibrates to that functioning note. Good art is a process of eliminating all false notes, of excising all materials not characterized by the dominant underlying idea and emotion. "For always," Stevenson has told us, "of its own unity, the soul gives unity to whatever it looks on with love. . . . If the feeling is right, if it is vivid and sincere, and especially if it is a deeper and a more unconscious one, coming, in Pater's words, not from the mind but from the soul, then the whole product will be right, will grow and organize itself, taking what is its own by true affinity, passing over or rejecting what does not by nature belong to it. It will have a unity, as a tree or a flower will have, because it is alive."<sup>27</sup> Every poem is composed in one key. Both the creative poet and his reader require, in the finished product,

That mind and voice according well  
May make one music.

From the point of view of art, the creative poet's concern always must be that he present to his public a singleness of effect in each completed poem that he gives to the world. It is this sum total of effect of the whole considered as a unit that must come first. The tone of a poem as a whole is of first importance.

Poets are human and not superhuman. They express and communicate themselves in terms of ideas and feelings with

<sup>26</sup> Browning's "Shelley and the Art of Poetry."

<sup>27</sup> *Essays on the Art of Writing*.

which we have ourselves acquaintance. They are angry, they express anger; they are happy, they utter happiness; they are sad, they pour forth their sorrow; they are morally indignant, they pour out their righteous indignation. In temperament some poets are moody and meditative even to gloomy sadness; some are dreamy and musical even to the subtlest fancy; some are strongly masculine to the degree of being vigorous and even harsh; some are feminine to delicacy and even weakness. Some poets are interested in the romance of the far-gone past, others are interested in the romance of the remote future; some live in the spirit of the pioneer, others in the spirit of the formalities or conventions of aristocracy; some delight in the intense vigor of active life, others wish to withdraw into quiet seclusion. Then there are those who are strongly emotional rather than keenly intellectual; those who are classical rather than romantic; those who cherish the aloofness of hermit life rather than the intimacy and warmth resulting from close associations. No two think quite alike; no two respond to sensory impressions with the same degree of intensity; no two feel equally strongly about any given thing. Each poet expresses his own ideas and feelings in his own peculiar way.

Shelley not only could not but would not write "Chicago"—imagine it!—and Sandburg could not write "To a Skylark"; Poe could not have written "Patterns," and Amy Lowell could not have written "Annabel Lee"; Wordsworth would not have written "Dover Beach," and Matthew Arnold would not have composed "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality." "Ulysses" is a poem distinctly different from the "Ode on a Grecian Urn"; *As You Like It* is entirely different as a play from *Le Misanthrope* or *Frogs*; and "Daffodils" is at the opposite pole from "An Elegy Written

in a Country Chûrchyard." Sappho was not Homer; Theocritus was not Virgil; Dante was not Boccaccio. And Milton was not Browning, Burns not Pope; nor was Shakespeare Chaucer, though both were romanticists. Each poet has his own characteristic mood and temperament, his own attitude toward life, his own limited material, his own practice of poetic composition. When he is impelled, because of heightened mental and emotional functioning, to express and to communicate himself, his entire poem, both subject-matter and technique, assume a given definite mood and point of view—tone. The tone is a direct result of his own emotional status quo: the tone is organic.

It may be held that if a given poem does not have a single dominant mood or tone obtaining throughout its entire length, it is, just in that far, not good art. "Rabbi Ben Ezra," "Recessional," *Lycidas*, *The Blessed Damozel*, "L'Allegro," "Daffodils," "Highland Mary," have each distinct unity of tone. If the poet is really and deeply sincere, if he has really uttered his own ideas and feelings, there will be a singleness of mood, for the reason that when he functions emotionally to a high degree it is impossible suddenly for him to shift from one emotional and mental tension to another. A good poem is all about one underlying theme, and from but one angle, mood, or spirit. Tone is an organic quality in every good poem. Longfellow wrote his entire poem "The Song of King Olaf" in the same mood—that of the virile, aggressive, stern, Anglo-Saxon warrior. We catch this spirit at the very outset of the poem.

I am the God Thor,  
I am the War God,  
I am the Thunderer!  
Here in my Northland,



My fastness and fortress,  
Reign I forever!

Here amid icebergs  
Rule I the nations;  
This is my hammer,  
Miölnir the mighty;  
Giants and sorcerers  
Cannot withstand it!

'Any good poem is characterized by a unity of tone obtaining through its entire scope. We need but turn to any anthology of poetry, in any language, and carefully examine each poem, to see that this is a statement of fact.

The entire "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" of Christopher Marlowe is notably in a light, romantic, spirited mood. It is one of the finest love poems in the language: it is sincere, it is genuine. It is unified in idea, in material, in point of view, and in tone. There is not a false note in it. Of its kind, it is a poetic gem. Its unity of tone is what sustains it from first stanza to last:

THE PASSIONATE SHEPHERD TO HIS LOVE

Come live with me and be my love,  
And we will all the pleasures prove  
That hills and valleys, dale and field,  
And all the craggy mountains yield.

There will we sit upon the rocks  
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,  
By shallow rivers, to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

There will I make thee beds of roses  
And a thousand fragrant posies,

A cap of flowers, and a kirtle  
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle.

A gown made of the finest wool,  
Which from our pretty lambs we pull,  
Fair-lined slippers for the cold,  
With buckles of the purest gold.

A belt of straw and ivy buds  
With coral clasps and amber studs,  
And if these pleasures may thee move,  
Come live with me and be my love.

The silver dishes for thy meat  
As precious as the gods do eat,  
Shall on an ivory table be  
Prepared each day for thee and me.

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing  
For thy delight each May-morning;  
If these delights thy mind may move,  
Then live with me and be my love.

Ben Jonson's "To Celia," also one of the finest love poems in our language and a real gem of poetic utterance, is in a key entirely different from that of "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." This poem is calmly adoring, altogether loving but a bit restrained, in contrast to Marlowe's poem, which is actively amorous, romantic, and joyously carefree. Both poems were written almost in the same age, about the same subject, but in entirely different tones. Every thought, every line, each stanza of "To Celia" is in identically the same tone:

## TO CELIA

Drink to me only with thine eyes,  
And I will pledge with mine;  
Or leave a kiss but in the cup  
And I'll not look for wine.  
The thirst that from the soul doth rise  
Doth ask a drink divine;  
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,  
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,  
Not so much honoring thee  
As giving it a hope that there  
It could not wither'd be,  
But thou thereon didst only breathe,  
And sent'st it back to me;  
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,  
Not of itself but thee!

That every good poem has its characteristic tone requires no further argument or illustration. "An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is serious and solemn—restrained; "Chicago," vigorous and a bit masculine; "Dover Beach," intellectual and yearning; "Patterns," dignified and tragic; "The Song of the Chattahoochee," musically longing; Milton's "L'Allegro," light and tripping, and his "Il Penseroso" more meditative. *Beowulf* is epical in its dignity; and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is dreamily aesthetic—a poem and a tone that really few of us are poetical enough to appreciate. Even when a poem is conceived as a whole but written in parts, the entire poem has a singleness of tone and each part also has its characteristic spirit. Close analysis and sympathetic study of poems written in parts, as Vachel Lindsay's "The Congo," and Tennyson's "Maud," "The Vision of Sin," and "The

Lady of Shalott," will demonstrate this. "The Lady of Shalott" especially illustrates the unity of tone of a poem as a whole and the unity of tone of each of its parts. From this point of view, this poem merits very careful consideration. In truth, Tennyson nowhere proved himself more the artist.

Critics and students of poetry have all too often made the mistake of considering tone as applying only to the "purple patches" in a poem. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the tone of the entire poem is of far more consequence than the tone-color of one or two isolated passages. The poem as a unit must be toneful and poetic; a few stray or random lines of excellent tonal quality in an otherwise ill-toned poem are like burnished gold buttons on a dilapidated suit of hempen homespun. A single line of good tone quality never, in itself, makes a good poem out of a bad one.

It is a physiological phenomenon, which Herbert Spencer has made very clear, that the vocal organs in man and animals are greatly affected by the emotional status quo in the nerve centers, because all emotional states are directly the result of the relation between sensory impressions and muscular expression. We actually have come to recognize the character of these emotions by means of the tone-color in the speaking voice. Tone-color is the direct indication of the status of the speaker's emotion. The whining quality in a beggar's sentimental appeal for alms; a happy child's crooning in its crib; the angular staccato of the sounds of one who is violently quarreling; the mellow semi-monotone of the devout saint who prays; the tremulous shriek of one frightened; the cool and deliberate tones of deep hate—each is concrete evidence that the kind and quality of sound

given forth by the vocal apparatus are directly the complement of the dominant emotional state in the nerve centers. Expression of pain or pleasure, of depression or exaltation, of sorrow or joy, of love or hate, of acceptance or repetition, of vigor or lassitude, are readily detected both in the quality of the spoken sounds and in the vowels and consonants employed in written discourse, whether prose or poetry. The organic appropriateness and fitness of vowels and consonants—as they appear in words and speech groups—in expressing ideas and especially emotions is tone-color.<sup>28</sup>

Environmental climatic conditions and race tendencies make for each language's having its fundamental sound basis a bit unlike that of any other language. German, for instance, is spoken far back in the throat and has many rather

<sup>28</sup> For studies in tone-color, see Guest's *History of English Rhythms*, Volume I, Book 1, chapters 11–111; Verrier's *Essai sur les principes de la métrique anglaise*, Part I, chapters ii, v, viii; Jacob's *The Foundations and Nature of Verse*, chapters iv, v, Lanier's *The Science of English Verse*, Stevenson's *Style in Literature*, Sherman's *Analytics of Literature*, chapters iii, v, vi; Raymond's *Poetry as a Representative Art*, Maxim Hudson's *The Science of Poetry and the Philosophy of Language*, Tolman's "The Symbolic Value of Sounds" in *Hamlet and Other Essays*, Rickert's *New Method for the Study of Literature*, chapter vi; Eastman's *The Enjoyment of Poetry*, chapters 1–iv, Andrews' *The Writing and Reading of Verse*, chapter viii, Alden's *English Verse*, chapter iv, "Tone-Quality", and Puffer's *The Psychology of Beauty*, chapters iii, vi.

For laboratory and research materials, see Scripture's *Elements of Experimental Phonetics* and his *Researches in Experimental Phonetics*, Helmholtz's "Speech Sounds: Their Nature and Causation," *Phonetische studien*, Part III, Miller's *The Science of Musical Sounds*, Pipping's *Zur Klangfarbe der gesungenen Vocale*, Hewlett's "Analysis of Complex Sound Waves," *Physical Review*, XXXV, 359–372; Gilver's "The Psycho-physiological Effect of the Elements of Speech in Relation to Poetry," *Psychological Monographs*, XIX, 2; Liddell's "The Physical Characteristics of Speech Sound," *Bulletin of Purdue University*, Bevier's "The Acoustic Analysis of Vowels," *Physical Review*, April 1900.

harsh gutturals; French, with its Latin base, is spoken somewhat more well-formed in the mouth and on the lips, and has, with its nasals, a lighter smoothness; and Arabic, for instance, has vowel utterances unlike anything in French or in German or in our own native English; while in Greek the musical quality and in Latin the sonorous values need only to be mentioned. Naturally those sounds—and their number is infinite in their possibility—which recur most frequently and those which make up most of the structural units (the speech groups) are the basis of any given language. Indeed, they create a basic tone-color to which one who is speaking or writing that language returns again and again. It may be said that every language is written and spoken in something of a definite key. Accordingly, Hebrew poetry neither sounds like nor is written as is Japanese poetry, Russian poetry is thus different from French; and ancient Greek poetry stands apart, as it were, from modern English. A practiced ear familiar with the several languages readily identifies a language he hears spoken by the characteristic vowel and consonant dominants in that language. In the English language, having approximately fifteen vowel sounds and twenty-four consonant sounds, the thirty-nine sounds are used with different degrees of frequency. Those vowel and consonant sounds that recur most often may be looked upon as the basic norm of the language, the key, so to speak, in which most of its prose and poetry of a creative kind are written.<sup>29</sup> The words in our English vocabulary,

<sup>29</sup> See Jacob's *The Foundations and Nature of Verse*, chapters iv, v, and Gilver's "The Psycho-physiological Effect of the Elements of Speech in Relation to Poetry," *Psychological Monographs*, XIX, No. 2; and Professor E. W. Scripture's *Grundzüge der Englischen Verswissenschaft* (1929).

then, are not dead and inane things. Their sounds really pulsate with emotional values. Really the sound norms in our words and sentences are organic. "Words do not have meanings, they *are* meanings through their power to direct suggestion and induction. They may become what they signify. Nor is this power confined to words alone; on its possession by the phrase, sentence, or verse rests the whole theory of style. The short, sharp staccato, the bellowing turbulent, the swimming melodious circling sentence *are* truly what they mean, in their form as in the objective sense of their words. The sound-values of rhythm and pace have been in other chapters fully dwelt upon; the expressive power of breaks and variations is worth noting also. Of the irresistible significance of rhythm, even against content, we have an example amusingly commented on by Mr. G. K. Chesterton in his *Twelve Types*:

"He [Byron] may arraign existence on the most deadly charges, he may condemn it with the most desolating verdict, but he cannot alter the fact that on some walk in a spring morning when all the limbs are swinging and all the blood alive in the body, the lips may be caught repeating:

'Oh, there's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,  
When the glow of early youth declines in beauty's dull decay.'

That automatic recitation is the answer to the whole pessimism of Byron."<sup>80</sup>

Words (vowels and consonants) and phrases are organically linked inseparably: words and phrases do not symbolize or represent ideas and emotions; they *are* ideas and emotions.

Our scientific authorities in the field of sound and tone-

<sup>80</sup> Puffer's *The Psychology of Beauty*, page 215.

color remind us that there is—say, in the instance of a given vowel sound—no such thing as a pure and simplified tone. A simple vibration is never simplified; that is, “The quality of every musical sound, whether of instrument or of voice, is determined by a particular series of partials accompanying a given fundamental.”<sup>81</sup> Clarence Wilson Hewlett found this to be the case for the G-string of all good violins, the intensity of the second partial (first overtone) containing 90 to 100 per cent of the total intensity of the string.<sup>82</sup> “With every such wave there always go large numbers of small waves riding on the larger waves; and these impinge upon the ear, along with the larger wave. The larger wave is called the fundamental tone or note, and the smaller waves give it tone-color.”<sup>83</sup> Each partial vibrates at a different rate per second from that of the whole, thus making a tone different in pitch from the whole string which gives us the fundamental tone. The tones of these segments combine with that of the fundamental, and all are heard by the ear as one tone. To be of any value a tone must possess character and distinction. It must have a personality of its own. This differentiating quality of sound is undeniably a question of partials, or overtones. It is the number of overtones that differentiates a human voice tone from an artificial instrument tone. A human voice is very rich in overtones! In singing or in speaking—in reading poetry aloud—the voice is liquid and flowing; that is, there is constant change, progression, with the flow of thought and

<sup>81</sup> Jacob's *The Foundations and Nature of Verse*, page 46

<sup>82</sup> “Analysis of Complex Sound Waves,” *Physical Review*, XXXV, 359-372.

<sup>83</sup> Hudson Maxim's *The Science of Poetry and Philosophy of Language*, page 7.



emotion. "A vowel," for instance, "is not a fixed thing but a changing phenomenon."<sup>84</sup> In the midst of so varied a succession of associated sounds, "There is no such thing as a vowel *a* with a definite character under all circumstances."<sup>84</sup> Tone-color in poetry, even in the instance of individual vowels and consonants, is not pure, because no one tone is sustained beyond a moment when it is modified by the other vowel and consonant tones which follow in the progressive reading process.

Now perhaps the most interesting phenomenon in all the realm of sound as perceived by a human being is the instinctive tendency, once a tone has been established as a norm and once we deviate from it, to return to that tone, to come back again to the norm.<sup>85</sup> This returning to the norm is what we know as our sense and our longing for melody. Psychologically, therefore, melody is nothing else than a variety of desire, a longing, a craving. Melody, we may hold, is, from a strictly psychological standpoint, a specific class of emotions—a class, too, that is peculiarly connected with tone.

It follows that every poem, every unusual poetic flight (purple patch)—and no poem is all poetry nor need it be all poetry, Coleridge tells us—which is the result of a sustained rhythmic emotional flow will be expressed in a given dominant tone and associated tones. It will be expressed in what we must term melody or tone-color. If the vowels and consonants, in a given passage, are not peculiarly apt,

<sup>84</sup> Scripture's *Elements of Experimental Phonetics*, page 53.

<sup>85</sup> See Henry Lanz's "The Physical Basis of Rime," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, Volume XLI, No. 4, for an excellent discussion of this point. His presentation is expanded in his *The Physical Basis of Rime*, Stanford University Press, 1931.

not complementa~~ae~~ to the idea and emotion, not especially fitted to the emotional quality, then, in all likelihood, the poet was not sincere and exalted when he wrote. In any case, he is artificial and really unpoetical. *Tone-color is natural and organic*. Analysis of Poe's poems shows that many of his poems, and especially many of his purple patches, have  $\bar{o}$  as the dominant norm; Byron's have  $\bar{o}$ ; Shelley's have  $\bar{e}$  and  $\bar{i}$ . Thus the last stanza of Poe's "Annabel Lee" establishes the dominant vowel sound ( $\bar{o}$ ) in the first line,

For the *moon* never beams without bringing me dreams,

And we return to this dominant, after several variations from the norm in the middle of the stanza, in the very last line,

In the *tomb* by the sounding sea.

The variations from the norm (*beams, dreams, Lee, feel, sea* and *rise, bright, eyes, night-tide, he, side, life, bride*, that is, long  $e$ 's and long  $i$ 's) serve only to intensify the melody, the return to the norm of loving but moody sadness so effectively expressed by the long  $oo$  sound. The presence of many liquid  $l$ 's,  $r$ 's,  $m$ 's is but the presence of additional overtones. The soothing vowel sounds and the liquid consonants, in combination, make for additional harmony and melody. This organic harmony between vowels and consonants and this organic relationship between tones and emotions is tone-color. It is a natural quality attendant upon every exaltingly poetic utterance in every language. Naturally some languages, by their very nature, have more tone-color possibilities than others. Contrary to general belief, the English language is unusually rich in tone-color possibilities, in that it has over fifteen recognized and well-defined vowel sounds, in contrast, let us say, to the supposedly very elastic Italian,

which has but six vowel sounds. In poetry, the possibilities of a language may be partly determined by the several sounds at the poet's bidding. A language that has a goodly number at its disposal is a ready instrument for the expression of a large variety of emotional values. English is, thus, an unusually poetic language. Most of the many poems and poetic flights in English are expressed in organic tones and tone-colors.

To Horace we are indebted for the precept that good style is but appropriateness of phrasing in the expression of ideas. Thus moody and meditative thoughts should be expressed in moody language; harsh, rigid, and terse thoughts should be uttered in vigorous and even angular phrasing; and the lighter fancies should be put forth in delicate and lilting words and sentences. In poetry the appropriateness of consonant and vowel sounds to the thoughts and emotions expressed is tone-color. It need not be reiterated that some poems are quite hard and angular in their content and that others are rather musical; that is, not all poetry is necessarily musical, in the conventional sense, for the simple reason that certain kinds of ideas and feelings are red-blooded, angular, and even harsh. To express such thought and emotion in smooth, melodious phrasing would be like placing beautifully auburn, curled tresses on the head of the angular-faced, lantern-jawed Ichabod Crane! There is fitness of phrasing in poetic utterance quite as much as appropriateness in dress and manners. And when the phrasing fits, irrespective of whether it be musical in the one instance or harsh in the other, we are pleased. It has artistic and noble beauty. Tennyson, for instance, expressed a rather angular and harsh idea in an angular and harsh manner; note, however, that the thought of the first line and that of

the last two lines are different from the rest and that they, are expressed in entirely different combinations of vowels and consonants:

His own thought drove him like a goad.  
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves  
As d barren chasms, and all to left and right  
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based  
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang  
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—  
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake  
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Browning, in "Rabbi Ben Ezra," expressed a vigorous, active idea and feeling in vigorous, active phrasing. The vowels and consonants are in such combinations as enhance the thought communicated to us.

Then welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!  
Be our joys three-parts pain!  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain,  
Learn, nor account the pang, dare, never  
grudge the throe!

Macaulay, expressing a harsh command, employed phrasing that intensifies its directness and virility:

Down! down! you lances down!  
Bear back both friend and foe.

Milton, on the other hand, expressing a light, gay, and fanciful mood, used a combination of light, quick consonants and rapid, short vowels:

Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest and youthful Jollity,  
Quips, and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,  
Nods, and Becks, and wreathed Smiles,  
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,  
And love to live in dimple sleek;  
Sport that wrinkled Care derides  
And Laughter holding both his sides.

And Browning, in Earl Mertoun's song in "A Blot in the Scutcheon," expressed a moody, reminiscent, romantically passionate love in smooth, lyrical music—a combination of connotative vowels and consonants that is pure melody. Note the dominant norm, the *u*'s and the tendency to return to this norm. This is melody. This is tone-color.

There 's a woman like a dewdrop she 's so purer  
than the purest,  
And her noble heart 's the noblest, yes, and her  
sure faith 's the surest:  
And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on  
depth of lustre  
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than  
the wild-grape cluster,  
Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-  
misted marble  
Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's  
bubbling, the bird's warble!

Tone-color is not an accident in our poetry. There is a physiological basis for it. There is a direct relation between our thoughts and feelings and the vowels and consonants in the words and sentences that express and communicate them. When, in our ideas and emotions, we are vigorous, direct, and tense, the muscles of our bodies become rigid and tense.

Likewise our vocal apparatus becomes rigid and tense. In such a case the hard consonants and the shorter explosive vowels would be forthcoming. Accordingly, the more aggressive and insistent our thoughts and feelings, the more rigid the consonants and the more closed are the vowels used (such as *b, d*, hard *g, k, p, t*, hard *c*):

What is he *doing* the *great* God *Pan*  
Down in the *reeds* by the river?

Or,

For *God*, our *God*, is a gallant foe  
That *playeth* behind the veil.

Or,

When with *puffed* cheek the *belted* hunter *blew*  
That wreathed *bugle-horn*.

And,

As thou art *lief* and *dear*, and *do* the thing  
I *bade* thee, watch and lightly *bring* me word.

Now at the very same time that our tense and more vigorous emotions are being expressed by a rigid vocal apparatus in terms of the harder consonants, the vowels used are also of the sharper and more explosive kind—the short vowel sounds (*ă, ě, ě, ō, ů*). Usually, then, the alliterated hard consonants are associated with the closed, short, and somewhat explosive vowel sound.

The *Wēdding-Guēst* here *beat* his *brēast*

Or,

I *bīt* my arm and *sūcked* my *blōōd*

Or,

I *closed* my *līds*, and *kēpt* them *close*,  
And the *balls* like *pūlses* *beat*

And the closing strophe of "Ulysses," the most vigorous and

the most typically Anglo-Saxon part of the poem, is largely in hard consonants and short vowels.

'T is not too late to seek a newer world.  
Push off and sitting well in order smite  
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset and the baths  
Of all the western stars, until I die.  
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down.  
It may be that we shall touch the Happy Isles,  
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew,  
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

In the close of Part V of Tennyson's *The Princess*, in which the great battle is narrated, there is a most vigorous clashing of opposing forces. To express and communicate such a joust or battle as this requires a combination of very vigorous and hard consonants with rapid, quick, short vowels. Sleepy, lazy, musical consonants and vowels would not fit the subject-matter; they would be wholly inappropriate. After the close of the battle, when the Prince has been defeated, note the somber, slow-moving, funeral dirge, in which the vowel and consonant combination is entirely different from that of the description of the conflict. Both parts have excellent tone-color.

The lists were ready. Empanoplied and plumed  
We enter'd in, and waited, fifty there  
Opposed to fifty, till the trumpet blared  
At the barrier like a wild horn in a land

Of echoes, and a moment, and once more  
The trumpet, and again; at which the storm  
Of galloping hoofs bare on the ridge of spears  
And riders front to front, until they closed  
In conflict with the crash of shivering points,  
And thunder. Yet it seem'd a dream, I dream'd  
Of fighting. On his haunches rose the steed,  
And into fiery splinters leapt the lance,  
And out of stricken helmets sprang the fire.  
Part sat like rocks; part reel'd but kept their seats;  
Part roll'd on the earth and rose again and drew;  
Part stumbled mixt with floundering horses. Down  
From those two bulks at Arac's side, and down  
From Arac's arm, as from a giant's flail,  
The large blows rain'd, as here and everywhere  
He rode the mellay, lord of the ringing lists,  
And all the plain—brand, mace, and shaft, and shield—  
Shock'd, like an iron-clanging anvil bang'd  
With hammers; till I thought, can this be he  
From Gama's dwarfish loins? if this be so,  
The mother makes us most—and in my dream  
I glanced aside, and saw the palace-front  
Alive with fluttering scarfs and ladies' eyes  
And highest, among the statues, statue-like,  
Between a cymbal'd Miriam and a Jael,  
With Psyche's babe, was Ida watching us,  
A single band of gold about her hair,  
Like a saint's glory up in heaven, but she,  
No saint—inexorable—no tenderness—  
Too hard, too cruel. Yet she sees me fight,  
Yea, let her see me fall. With that I drave  
Among the thickest and bore down a prince,  
And Cyril one. Yea, let me make my dream  
All that I would. But that large-moulded man,



His visage all agrin as at a wake,  
Made at me thro' the press, and, staggering back  
With stroke on stroke the horse and horseman, came  
As comes a pillar of electric cloud,  
Flaying the roofs and sucking up the drains,  
And shadowing down the champaign till it strikes  
On a wood, and takes, and breaks, and cracks, and splits,  
And twists the grain with such a roar that Earth  
Reels, and the herdsmen cry; for everything  
Gave way before him. Only Florian, he  
That loved me closer than his own right eye,  
Thrust in between, but Arac rode him down.  
And Cyril seeing it, push'd against the Prince,  
With Psyche's color round his helmet, tough,  
Strong, supple, sinew-corded, apt at arms,  
But tougher, heavier, stronger, he that smote  
And threw him. Last I spurr'd, I felt my veins  
Stretch with fierce heat, a moment hand to hand,  
And sword to sword, and horse to horse we hung,  
Till I struck out and shouted, the blade glanced,  
I did but shear a feather, and dream and truth  
Flow'd from me; darkness closed me, and I fell.

Home they brought her warrior dead,  
She nor swoon'd nor utter'd cry.  
All her maidens, watching, said,  
"She must weep or she will die."

Then they praised him, soft and low,  
Call'd him worthy to be loved,  
Truest friend and noblest foe,  
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,  
Lightly to the warrior stept,

Took the face-cloth from the face;  
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,  
Set his child upon her knee—  
Like summer tempest came her tears—  
"Sweet my child, I live for thee."

Now, if our bodies and our vocal apparatus are tense and rigid when our emotions are tense and rigid, then it must follow that our bodies and our vocal apparatus are relaxed and free from strain when our emotions are meditative and musing in kind. Accordingly, in expressing the more relaxed and more musing feelings and thoughts, the more liquid consonants (*l, m, n, r, f, s, v, w*) will most naturally be employed. And with these liquid consonants, the open, long, and musical vowels (*ā, ē, ī, ō, ū, ōō*) will be used.

Where *mūsic* and *mōōnlight* and *fēēlings* are one.

Or,

In *maiden meditātion fancy frēē*.

Or,

While *melting mūsic stēals* along the *skȳ*  
And *softened sounds* along the *waters līe*.

Or,

*Drēamland līes* forlorn of *līght*

And Walter De la Mare's "Tired Tim" has just enough of harder consonants in it to make, by contrast, the liquid consonants and open vowel sounds stand out more melodiously.

#### TIRED TIM

Pōōr tired *Tīm*! It's *sad* for him.  
He *lags* the *long* bright *morning* through  
Ever so *tīred* of nothing to do;

He *mōons* and *mōpes* the *live/long* dāy  
 Nothing to think about, nothing to sāy;  
 Up to *bed* with his *candle* to *crēep*,  
 Too *tīred* to yawn; too *tīred* to *slēep*:  
*Pōor tīred Tīm!* It's sad for him.

Between the extremes of our vigorous thoughts and feelings expressed in hard consonants and short vowels, on the one hand, and our more relaxed and more moody ideas and emotions expressed in liquid consonants and long open vowels, on the other, we have unusually large opportunity for variety of tone-color effects. All will depend upon what consonant or what vowel—often a single one will determine the entire effect—predominates. If *l*'s predominate, there results a lazy, lolling effect. The long *a*'s contribute their melodious effect also.

*E/āine* the *fāir*, *E/āine* the *lovab/e*,  
*E/āine* the *lily* māid of *Asto/at*.

If the *s*'s predominate there is an effect of weakness. The long *o*'s and *e*'s add a musical quality that is alluringly dreamy:

*Sō* slender *Sōhrab* *sēem'd*, *sō* softly *rēared*.

If the *z* sounds predominate, we approach a buzzing and humming sound—almost onomatopoeia—that is melodious. The *l*'s and the long *e*'s contribute to the melody.

The broad ambrosial aisles of lofty pines  
 Made noise with *bēes* and *brēeze* from end to end.

And if the *m*'s and *l*'s prevail, the result is the most melodious ever. The *oō* and the *ū* add to the subtle music.

*Mōonlit* solitūde *mild* of the *midmost* ocean

On the other hand, when the hard consonants rather than the softer, liquid consonants predominate, all sorts of rapid, scintillating results obtain. *G's, l's, r's* plus short vowels or plus the suffix *-ing* give a rapid, flitting effect (note the retarding effect of the *h's*):

*He holds him with his glittering eye*

Or,

*Fled like a glittering rivulet*

When the *l's, r's, p's* are combined with short and long vowels there results a most subtle effect of action in the midst of relaxation.

*I heard the water lapping on the crag  
And the long ripple washing in the reeds*

And when we combine *f's, l's, r's* with the open vowels *a, e, o*, we get an effect that is real to us but which is all but indescribable.

*The fair brēeze blēw, the white fōam flēw  
The furrow followed frēe.*

If, however, it is not the consonants that predominate but the vowels, then a still more musical and often sonorous effect results. If long *ō* prevails, there is a sad, moody sonorousness. Note below the contributory contrasting effect of the alliterative hard consonant, *c*; note also the effects of the weak *w's* and *l's* in the closing two lines.

*O Mary, gō and call the cattle hōme,  
And call the cattle hōme,  
And call the cattle hōme,  
Across the sands of Dee.*

*The western wind was wild and dank with fōam,  
And all alōne went she.*

But if a hard consonant *b* and the consonant *r* be added to the effect of the long *o*, a curious effect of intricacy and of functioning energy is felt.

*Labōrious ōrient ivōry, sphere in sphere*

And if the long *oo*'s and *e*'s predominate and with them are associated liquid *m*'s, then there is ethereal music such as only Poe could evoke:

For the *mōon* never *bēams* without bringing  
*mē drēams*.

And, finally, if the predominant long *o*'s are accompanied by *m*'s and *l*'s and *s*'s we get a prolonged, stately, and dignified effect of pageant movement:

*Lead out the pageant: sad and slōw,  
As fits a universal wōe,  
Let the long, long procession gō,  
And let the sorrowing crowd about it grōw,  
And let the mournful martial music blōw,  
The last great Englishman is lōw.*

A note of warning is here in order. Tone-color as an organic element in poetic effect ceases to be organic and ceases to be properly effective (1) when it becomes merely imitative (onomatopoeia), (2) when it draws attention to itself because it is so obvious, and (3) when it is employed for purely alliterative effect, as it so often is by our writers of the cheaper kind of moralizing and rîmed philosophy. Poe's "The Bells" is conceded to be quite onomatopoeic. It is an unusual *tour de force* of onomatopoeia. Each stanza deals with a different type of bell sound (sleigh bells, wedding bells, fire alarm bells, solemn and groaning bells) by imi-

tation. With all its poetic technique—its rhythm, its repetitious parallelism, its tempo, its line length, its stanza form, and its climactic poetic patter—it remains pretty much a bit of imitative musical effect.

Whenever alliteration and assonance draw attention to themselves, they no longer serve as a happy medium by which the poet's ideas and feelings are expressed. Good style is that which is fitting but which in no wise calls attention to itself. Kipling, as well as Poe, comes dangerously near this at times, and Swinburne rather often. Witness Poe's:

Come up through the *l*air of the *l*ion  
With *l*ove in her *l*uminous eyes.

and Swinburne's:

The *l*ilies and *l*anguors of virtue  
The *r*apture and *r*oses of vice.

and his

With *l*isp of *l*eaves and *r*ipple of *r*ain.

We must choose vowel and consonant combinations for their appropriateness to the idea expressed and not for their sing-song alliterative and assonant effect. In Swinburne sometimes we are impelled to forget all about the poetry and stop to count the alliterations.

Low down where the *th*icket is *th*icker with *th*orns  
than with *l*eaves in summer.

. . . . .

*S*hrill *s*hrieks in faces the *b*lind *b*land air that  
was *m*ute as a *m*aiden.

*S*tung into *s*torm by the *s*peed of our *p*assage, and  
*d*eaf when we past.

And another one from the same author,

From the lips everliving of laughter and love  
everlasting that leave  
In the cleft of his heart who shall kiss them a  
snake to corrode it and cleave.  
So glimmers the flower into glory, the glory  
recalls into gloom.<sup>36</sup>

Such alliteration as the foregoing would have been the delight of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers before *Beowulf*, but today it is too much. And Swinburne must himself have felt the artificial tingle of it all, for in his "Nyphalidia" he parodies himself to delightful absurdity. "Ho! Ho!" we cry, "what sheer nonsense!"

Made meek as a mother whose bosom beats  
bound with the bliss-bringing bulk of  
a balm-breathing baby.

In genuine poetic art there can be no charlatanism, none of the parade and insincere false show of the mountebank. Art is not to be praised for what it actually achieves but for what it aspires to be. It is a yearning of the spirit, not the skill of the hand, which gives poetry its real value. The poet is the one person among human beings who feels deepest and touches bottom. Feeling and thinking deeply, he is concerned with making others think and feel deeply. To express himself, in poetry, he is obliged to use the language at his command. All tone-color is but artistic emphasis to bring out poetic values. All ideas and emotions expressed and all tone values employed as the result of such ideas and emotions act

<sup>36</sup> The first from "Hesperia," the second from "Garden of Cymodoce."

as a stimulus to arouse similar thoughts and emotions in the reader. The true poem is the poet's mind and heart. But the reader is also a poet when he reads that poem as poetically as he can. Language leaps into fire, into melody, into superb beauty, in the hands of the sincere and exalted creative poet. When there is genuine poetry behind the poem, then it is art, for emotion and language are then inseparably one.

## ART

All things are doubly fair  
If patience fashion them  
And care—  
Verse, enamel, marble, gem.

No idle chains endure:  
Yet, Muse, to walk aright,  
Lace tight  
Thy buskin proud and sure.

Fie on a facile measure,  
A shoe where every lout  
At pleasure  
Slips his foot in and out!

Sculptor, lay by the clay  
On which thy nerveless finger  
May linger,  
Thy thoughts flown far away.

Keep to Carrara rare,  
Struggle with Paros cold,  
That hold  
The subtle line and fair.



Let haply nature lose  
That proud, that perfect line,  
    Make thine  
The bronze of Syracuse.

And with a tender dread  
Upon an agate's face  
    Retrace  
Apollo's golden head.

Despise a watery hue  
And tints that soon expire.  
    With fire  
Burn thine enamel true.

Twine, twine in artful wise  
The blue-green mermaid's arms  
    Mid charms  
Of thousand heraldries.

Show in their triple lobe  
Virgin and Child, that hold  
    Their globe,  
Cross-crowned and aureoled.

—All things return to dust  
Save beauties fashioned well.  
    The bust  
Outlasts the citadel.

Oft doth the plowman's heel,  
Breaking an ancient clod,  
    Reveal  
A Caesar or a god.

The gods, too, die, alas!  
But deathless and more strong  
Than brass  
Remains the sovereign song.

Chisel and carve and file,  
Till thy vague dreams imprint  
Its smile  
On the unyielding flint.

—THÉOPHILE GAUTIER



## APPENDIX







## APPENDIX A



For a critical discussion of the cult of "poetic madness" such works as the following will be of value: R. P. Cowl's *Theory of Poetry in England*, chapter 1, "Theory of Poetic Creation"; R. A. Scott-James's *The Making of Literature*; the annotated texts of Horace, Vida, and Boileau in Cook's *Art of Poetry*; Prescott's *The Poetic Mind*, and, for its application to the theory of dramatic composition, Barrett Clark's *European Theories of the Drama*. The many critical treatises on literary theory from Aristotle to Croce all contain material on the subject.

The particular passage in Aristotle's *Poetics*, Book XVII, that is cited in support of "madness" is "διὸ εὐφροῦς ἢ ποιητικὴ ἔστιν ἢ μανικοῦ." A careful reading of the entire accompanying context will show that perhaps Aristotle did not have "madness," in its modern conventional meaning of organic derangement, in mind.

"ὅσα δὲ δυνατόν καὶ τοῖς σχήμασιν συναπεργαζόμενον. πιθανώταται γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως οἱ ἐν τοῖς πάθεσιν εἶσιν καὶ χειμαίνει ὁ χειμαζόμενος καὶ χαλεπαίνει ὁ ὀργιζόμενος ἀληθινώτατα. διὸ εὐφροῦς ἢ ποιητικὴ ἔστιν ἢ μανικοῦ. τούτων γὰρ οἱ μὲν εὐπλαστοὶ οἱ δὲ ἐκστατικοὶ εἰσιν."

"Again, the poet should work out his play, to the best of his power, with appropriate gestures; for those who feel emotion are most convincing through natural sympathy with the characters they represent, and one who is agitated storms, one who is angry rages, with most life-like reality. *Hence poetry implies either a happy gift of nature or a strain of madness.* In the one case a man can take the mould of any character; in the other he is lifted out of his proper self."—Butcher's translation, Book XVII, 61.

"For the poet as much as possible should co-operate with the gestures [of the actor], since those are naturally most adapted to persuade others who are themselves under the influence of passion. Hence, also, he agitates others who is himself agitated, and he excites others to anger who is himself most truly enraged. *Hence, poetry is the province of either one who is*

*naturally clever, or of one who is insane.* For of these characters, the one is easily fashioned, but the other is prone to ecstasy."—Buckley's translation, Book XVII, 441, Bohn's Libraries edition.

But Twining, in a long and learned note, expresses his opinion that *χειμαίνει* may be used in its proper neuter sense, and that the meaning may be as follows:

"The poet should work himself, as far as may be, into the passion he is to represent, by even assuming the countenance and the gestures which are its natural expressions. For they, of course, have most probability and truth in their imitations, who actually feel, in some degree, the passion: and no one expresses agitation of mind (*χειμαίνει*) so naturally (*ἀληθινώτατα*), as he who is really agitated (*χειμαζόμενος*), or expresses anger (*χαλεπαίνει*) so naturally, as he who is really angry (*ὀργιζόμενος*)."—Bohn's Libraries edition of *Aristotle's Works*. Footnote to *Poetics*, chapter xvii, page 441.

"... in an enthusiasm allied to madness"—Twining's translation of the special passage, *ibid.*

"... *eos, qui connexion commotores sunt.*"—Ritter's Latin translation, *ibid.*

On the connection between poetic enthusiasm and madness, see Plato, *Ion*, 145 . C, etc. (Jowett's translation, I, 502), Plato, *Phaedrus*, 344 . B. (Jowett's translation, I, 450); Theodorēt, Θεορ., ii . 25; Cicero, *De Divinatione*, i . 37.

"All good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed. And as the Corymbantian revellers when they dance are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind, when falling under the power of music and meter they are inspired and possessed, like Bacchic maidens who draw milk and honey from the rivers when they are under the influence of Dionisus, but not when they are in their right mind. And the soul of the lyric poet does the same, as they themselves say, for they tell us that they bring songs from the honeyed fountains, calling them out of the gardens and dells of the Muses; they, like the bees, winging their way from flower to flower. And this is true, for the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him."

Plato's *Ion* accords the foregoing to Socrates.

"There is also a third kind of madness, of those who are possessed of the Muses; which enters into a delicate and virgin soul, and there inspiring frenzy awakens lyrical and all other numbers; with these adorning the myriad actions of ancient heroes for the instruction of posterity. But he who, having no touch of the Muse's madness in his soul, comes to the door and thinks that he will get into the temple by help of art—he, I say, and his poetry are not admitted; the sane man is nowhere at all when he enters into rivalry with the madman."—Plato's *Phaedrus*, Jowett's Translation, II, 121-122.

Plato attributes this to Socrates. Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* develops this Socrates-Plato idea.

"But above all, the ravishment of the spirit or that divine inspiration which is called *enthusiasmus*, casteth body, mind, voice, and all far beyond priests of Bacchus—[they] use rime and meter; those also who by a prophetic spirit give answer by oracle, deliver the same in verse, and few persons shall we see stark mad, but among the raving speeches they sing and say some verses."—Holland's translation, Plutarch's *Morals, Symposiasts*, I, 5.

"Nullum magnum ingenium sine mixtura dementiae fuit." ["Never was there great genius without a mixture of dementia."]

Seneca, in his *De Tranquillitate Animi*, xv. 16, attributes this to Aristotle.

"Poetam bonum neminem sine inflammatione animorum existeri posse, et sine quodam afflatu quasi furoris." ["I have often heard that no man can be a good poet without ardor of imagination, and the excitement of something similar to frenzy."]—Cicero's *De Oratore*, ii. 46, 194

Cicero here follows Plato and Democritus. Cf. Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, ii 66.

"One thing is plain, he has his fits of rage."—Horace's *Art of Poetry*, p. 35, in Cook's edition.

See pages 33-35 in Cook for additional comment on the "crazy" poet.

"... an infinite number of youth usually came to their great solemn feastes called Panegyrica, which they used every five yeere to hold, some learned man, being more hable than the rest for speciall gyftes of



wytte and musicke, and would take upon him to sing some fine verses to the people, in prayse eyther of vertue or of victory or of immortality, or such like. At whose wonderful gyft al men being astonied and as it were ravished with delight, thinking (as it was indeed) that he was inspired from above, calld him *vatem*: . . . and so were called poetes or makers."—Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar*, 1579, the *glosse* at the close of "October" cites this to "Plato, who in his first booke *de Legibus* sayth, etc."

"This science [Poesy] in his perfection cannot grow but by some divine instinct—the Platonics call it furor."—G. Puttenham's *Art of English Poery*, 1589.

"For what fine madness still he did retain  
That rightly should possess the poet's brain."

—Michael Drayton of *Christopher Marlowe* to *H. Reynolds*

"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact . . ."

—Shakespeare's *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* (1594), V. i. 7.

" . . . as Seneca saith, Aliquando secundum Anacreontem insanire iucundum esse, . . . Plato, Frustra poeticas fores sui compos pulsavit, . . . Aristotle, Nullum magnum ingenium sine mixtura dementiae fuit nec potest grande aliquid, et supra caeteros loqui, nisi mota mens." [*Seneca*, "At times according to Anacreon it is joyful to be insane, . . ."] *Plato*, "In vain does any one in full control of his senses knock at the poet's door, . . . *Aristotle*, "Never was there great genius without mixture of frenzy, nor can a mind, except it be in great emotion, give utterance to anything exalted or surpassing the others."—Ben Jonson's *Discoveries upon Men and Things*, 1620–35

" . . . extemporary fury, or rather inspiration, a dangerous word which many of late have successfully used, and inspiration is a spiritual fit"—Sir William D'Avenant's Preface to *Gondibert*, 1650

"For in fancy consisteth the sublimity of a poet, which is that poetic fury which the readers for the most part call for."—Thomas Hobbes' *The Virtue of an Heroic Poem*, 1675.

" . . . the hysteric or poetic fit."—Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712), IV, 60.

"I have thought

Too long and darkly, till my brain became,  
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,  
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame."

—Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1817), III, vii.

"I was half mad, during the time of its [*Childe Harold's*] composition, between metaphysics, mountains, lakes, love extinguishable, thoughts unutterable, and the nightmare of my own delinquencies."—Lord Byron in a letter to Moore, January 28, 1817.

"But truth to say, most rimers rarely guard  
Against the ridicule they deem so hard;  
In person negligent, they wear, from sloth,  
Beards of a week and nails of annual growth,  
Reside in garrets, fly from those they meet,  
And walk in alleys rather than the street."

—Lord Byron's "Hints from Horace," lines 465-470.



## APPENDIX B



For critical discussion of the cult of "divine inspiration," see: Conrad Aiken's *Scepticisms*, chapter 11, "The Mechanism of Poetic Inspiration"; R. P. Cowl's *Theory of Poetry in England*, chapter 1; R. A. Scott-James's *The Making of Literature*; the critical notes to the texts of Horace, Vida, and Boileau in Cook's *Art of Poetry*; and the well-known treatises of such writers as Quintilian, Longinus, Sidney, Jonson, Rousseau, Shelley, Spingarn, Croce, etc., etc. The recurrence of this dogma in dramatic theory is evidenced in the collated dramatic theories in Barrett Clark's *European Theories of the Drama*. The many excellent treatises on the several aspects of the Renaissance contain material on the cult of "divine inspiration" as applied to the arts of painting and architecture.

Christianity—especially the Middle Ages—has always been a most fertile ground for the direct acceptance of a given thesis and the citation of the authority of the Scriptures and of the Church Fathers in support. The Scholia, likewise, have often pursued the identical course. From authority there was no appeal. That the cults of "poetic madness" and "divine inspiration" should come into existence and that they persistently should recur through the centuries was a most natural consequence. It may be that in both instances the "authorities" have been misinterpreted. Modern laboratory experiment, in any instance, is quite unable to support their claims.

To the Latin poet, Ennius, much as in the instance of Aristotle, has been accredited, by subsequent enthusiasts who were seeking "authority" to support their own rhetorical precepts, ideas that are not always in complete accord with what he actually may have written. To Lucretius and Persius we are indebted for much of our information concerning Ennius.

"Lucret. I 120 sqq.:

'Etsi praeterea tamen esse Acherusia templa  
Ennius aeternis exponit versibus edens,  
Quo neque permaneant animae neque corpora nostra,  
sed quaedam simulacra modis pallentia miris;  
unde sibi exortam semper florentis Homeri  
commemorat speciem lacrimas effundere salsas  
coepisse et rerum naturam expandere dictis.'"

—Lucianus Mueller's edition of *Ennius* (Petropoli, 1884), Liber I, v. 7.

[“And yet furthermore Ennius sets forth expounding in his immortal verses (the view) that the quarters of Acheron nevertheless exist, (a place) whither neither our souls nor bodies avail to reach, but certain images pale in wondrous wise; and he tells that from here the likeness of flowering Homer appeared unto him and poured forth salt tears and began with words to lay open unto him the nature of things.” Translation by Dr. Andrew R. Anderson.]—Lucianus Mueller's edition of *Ennius* (Petropoli, 1884), Liber I, v. 7.

“Ennius poeta, qui primus Faunos veteres vatesque spreuit, Graecorum poetarum exemplum secutus, *Heliconem* et *Parnasum* petiit, ibique poetico spiritu se afflatus cecinit. Itaque ex *Hippocrene* bibisse se praedicavit (cf. Propert. iv. 2 [iii. 3] 5 sq.: Parvaeque tam magnis admoram fontibus ora, unde pater sitiens Ennius ante bibit), et, quod celebratissimum fuit, somniantem in monte Parnaso Homerum sibi adstantem vidisse, unde edoctus fugit Homeri animam in corpus suum transmigrasse, quo ex somno expectus poeta factis fuerit.”

[“The poet Ennius who first discarded the Fauns and bards of old and following the examples of the Greek poets sought Helicon and Parnassus, and sang that thence he received the afflatus of the poetic spirit. And thus he vaunted that he had drunk from Hippocrene, and, what was most well known, that he, while dreaming on Mount Parnassus had seen a vision of Homer appearing unto him, and that thence he learned that the soul of Homer had transmigrated into his own body, and that on awakening from this sleep he became a poet.” Translation by Dr. Andrew R. Anderson.]—Otto Jahn's Latin note on *Prologus* to Persius' *Satires* (Leipzig, 1843), p. 74.

“‘Lunai portum, est operae, cognoscite, cives!’ Cor iubet hoc Enni, postquam destertuit esse Maeonides, Quintus pavone ex Pythagoreo.” [“‘Acquaint yourselves with the haven of Luna, now's your time, good people all!’ so says Ennius' brain, when he had been roused from dreaming himself

Maeonides, Quintus developed out of 'Pythagoras' peacock."]—Persius' *Satires*, Conington-Nettleship edition (1893), VI, 9-11.

"From Cicero's *Ac. pr.* 2 . 16 and *Lucr.* 1 . 120 foll., it would appear that Ennius did not pretend to have been changed into Homer, but only to have seen him in a vision. Britannicus however, on *Epil.* 3 and here, refers to Porphyrio for the statement that Ennius said at the beginning of his *Annals* that Homer's spirit had passed into him in sleep. Homer's revelations, however, turned on the doctrine of metempsychosis, he having been a peacock in one stage of the process (note on *Epil.* 2) And so Persius represents Ennius as having been himself Homer and peacock, just as in *Epil.* 3 he uses the word "*memini*" as if it were Ennius' word about his own recollection, when it was really used of Homer's. Thus in *Hor.* 2 S. 5, 41, Furius is confused with his own Jupiter."—Conington-Nettleship's edition of *Persius* (Oxford, 1893), footnote, p. 124.

"Nec fonte labra prolui caballino,  
nec in bicipiti somniasse Parnaso  
memini, ut repente sic poeta prodirem."

—Persius' *Choliambi*, Conington-Nettleship's edition of *Persius*, p. 139.

Though these lines always appear at the end to Persius, the Scholia consider them an introduction to *all* his satires.

[Translation: "I never got my lips well drenched in the hack's spring—nor do I recollect having had a dream on the two-forked Parnassus, so as to burst upon the world at once as a full-blown poet."] Cf. "*labra prolui*" in Virgil's *Aeneid*, i 739, "*pleno se proluit auro*", and *Hor.* 1 S. 5, 16, "*prolulus vappa*."

"Others after him attempted, in the English nation to compose religious poems, but none could ever compose with him, for he did not learn the art of poetry from men, but from God; for which reason he never could compose any trivial or vain poem, but only those which related to religion suited his religious tongue; for having lived in a secular habit till he was well advanced in years, he had never learned anything of versifying; for which reason being sometimes at entertainments, when it was agreed for the sake of mirth that all present should sing in their turn, when he saw the instrument come towards him, he rose up from the table and returned home.

"Having done so at a certain time, and gone out of the house where the entertainment was, to the stable, where he had to take care of the horses that night, he there composed himself to rest at the proper time; a person appeared to him in his sleep, and saluting him by his name, said, 'Caedmon,

sing some song to me.' He answered, 'I cannot sing; for that was the reason why I left the entertainment, and retired to this place because I could not sing.' The other who talked to him replied, 'However, you shall sing.' 'What shall I sing?' rejoined he. 'Sing the beginning of created things,' said the other. Hereupon he presently began to sing verses to the praise of God, which he never heard, . . . Awakening from his sleep, he remembered all that he had sung in his dreams, and soon added much more to the same effect in verse worthy of the Deity."—Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, Book IV, chapter xxiv. Everyman's Library.

3 "I'm born a poet, blockheads clear the way!  
Plague take the hindmost! Genius scorns to own  
Dull precept's aid, or what's unlearnt unknown"  
—Horace's *Art of Poetry* (Cook's edition), page 31.

"Some read the ancient bards, of deathless fame,  
And from their rapture catch the noble flame,  
In just degree."  
—Vida's *Art of Poetry* (Cook's edition), page 105.

"Rash author, 'tis a vain presumptuous crime  
To undertake the sacred art of rime,  
If at thy birth the stars that ruled thy sense  
Shone not with a poetic influence,  
In thy strait genius thou wilt still be bound,  
Find Phoebus deaf, and Pegasus unsound."  
—Boileau's *Art of Poetry* (Cook's edition), page 159.

"Who . . . doth not wonder at poetry? who thinketh not that it proceedeth from above? . . . It is a pretty sentence, yet not so pretty as pithy, *poeta nascitur, orator fit* as who should say, poetry cometh from an excellent creature man, an orator is but made by exercise. For, if we examine well what befell Ennius among the Romans, and Hesiodus among his countrymen, the Grecians, how they came by their knowledge, whence they received their heavenly fury, the first will tell us that, sleeping on the Mount of Parnassus, he dreamed that he received the soul of Homer into him, after the which he became a poet, the next will assure you that it cometh not by labour, neither that night-watchings bringeth it, but that we must have it thence whence he fetched it, which was (he saith) from a well of the Muses which Persius called Caballinus, a draught whereof drew him to his perfection, so of a shepherd he became an eloquent poet. Well then you see that it cometh not by exercise of play-making, neither inser-

tion of gauds, but from nature and from above. . . . Persius was made a poet *divino furare percitus*, and whereas the poets were said to call for the Muses' help, their meaning was no other . . . but to call for heavenly inspiration from above to direct their endeavours. . . . Sibylla in her answer to Aeneas against her will, as the poet telleth us, was possessed with this fury; yea, weigh considerably but of the writing of poets, and you shall see that when their matter is most heavenly their style is most lofty, a strange token of the wonderfull efficacy of the same."—Thomas Lodge's *Defence of Poetry*, 1579.

"In Cuddie [one of the characters] is set out the perfecte pat-erne of a Poete, whiche finding no maintenance of his state and studies, complayneth of the contempte of Poetrie, and the causes thereof: Specially having bene in all ages, and even amongst the most barborous, alwayes of singular accompt and honor, and being indeede so worthy and commendable an arte; or rather no arte, but a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to bee gotten by laboure and learning, but adorned with both, and poured into the witte by a certain *Ἐνθουσιασμός* and celestiall inspiration, as the Author hereof elsewhere at large discourseth in his booke called *The English Poete*, which booke being lately come to my hands, I mynde also by God's grace, upon further advisement to publish."—Argument, supposed to have been written by Edward Kirke who was Spenser's friend, to the "October" eclogue to Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar*, 1579.

". . . the ancient-learned affirm it is a divine gift and no human skill,—*orator fit, poeta nascitur*."—Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, 1583.

". . . its perfection cannot grow but by some divine instinct—the Platonics call it *furor*, etc."—Puttenham's *Art of English Poetry*, 1589.

"Then it riseth higher, as by a divine Instinct, when it contemnes common and known conceptions. It utters somewhat above a mortall mouth. Then it gets aloft and flies away with his Ryder, whether, before, it was doubtful to ascend. This the Poets understood by their Helicon, Pegasus, or Parnassus, and this made Ovid boast,

"*'Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo.  
Sedibus aethereis spiritus ille venit.'*

"And Lipsius to affirm, *Scio, Poetam neminem praestantem fuisse, sine parte quodam uberiore divinae auras*. And hence it is that the coming up of good Poets (for I mind not mediocres or *imos*) is so thinne and rare among us. Every beggerly corporation affords the State a Major or two bailiffs yearly; but *Solus rex, aut poeta, non quotannis nascitur*."—Ben Jonson's *Discoveries upon Men and Matters*, 1620-35.

“ . . . extemporary fury, or rather inspiration . . . ”—Sir William D’Avenant’s Preface to *Gondibert*, 1650.

“A happy genius is the gift of nature: it is the particular gift of Heaven, say the divines both Christian and heathen. How to interpret it, many books can teach us; how to obtain it, none. That nothing can be done without it, all agree.”—John Dryden’s *Parallel of Poetry and Painting*, 1695.

“The poet in a golden clime was born,  
With golden stars above;  
Power’d with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,  
The love of love.”

—Alfred Tennyson’s “The Poet,” 1830.



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